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FIRST THINGS

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Number 44

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

The Illusions of Military Power
A. J. Bacevich

Why We Need Interreligious Polemics
Paul J. Griffiths

Politics of Virtues, Government of Knaves
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Learning from Sartre
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Culture Wars, Shooting Wars
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Opinions and Reviews: Peter L. Berger on Political Decency
Gerard V. Bradley on Martha Nussbaum • Christopher R. Seitz on Pluralism & Christian Apology • Alan Jacobs • Francis Canavan
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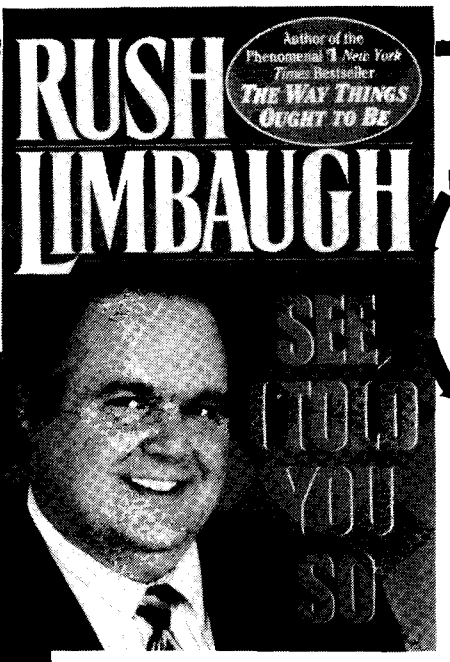

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FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

JUNE/JULY 1994 ● NUMBER 44

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FIRST THINGS

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Correspondence

Pro and Con on Homosexuality

Given a subscription to First Things, I read it eagerly for its cogent and coherent views on all things public. I read with dismay, however, the recent declaration of the Ramsey Colloquium in "The Homosexual Movement" (March), the ostensible purpose of which was to pass a moral judgment. While seemingly a "response" to "attack," the paper launched a counteroffensive laden with value judgments, unfair comparisons, and righteous, but baseless, fears. Though self-effacing and nuanced in form, the content is highly oppressive as it, again, subordinates and dismisses a "distorted" love [in an argument] based on a tradition . . . that allowed, without effective challenge, the systematic destruction of homosexuals, and others, in death camps—the conclusive embodiment of oppression. This is not "culture" but barbarianism and rightly calls forth a "counterculture" response. One cannot, as the authors do, claim a proprietary interest in history without being called to account for that history, a history, moreover, of virulent aggression generally. If the charge of "homophobia" no longer "intimidates" or "persuades," it can only be lamented, as the flourishing the authors seek is no house plant, but the bugle call to close ranks—where, once again, the ensuing militant excess will be disowned by those who sounded the tocsin.

William J. Cleary, Jr.
Los Angeles, CA

The article "The Homosexual Movement" by the Ramsey Colloquium is a superb response not only to the gay community but also the liberal straight community, which has supported, in varying degrees, the gay agenda. The article's unconcern about being labeled "homophobic" is courageous, especially since the gay movement is saturated with its own streaks of intolerance and bigotry.

But if I had been a member of the colloquium, I would have dissented on your dismissing the analogy of the original gay rights agenda, confined to legislation ending discrimination in employment and housing, with the civil rights movement of the sixties. The manifesto states: "The public declaration of status ('coming out of the closet') is a declaration of intended behavior." Not necessarily. Indeed, there seems to be a contradiction, since earlier the article refers to gays who "live lives of discipline and chastity."

The private turf of "sexual orientation" is well-taken. But its public turf should be divided into the "economic," by adding to the civil rights statutes "sexual orientation" in the areas of employment and housing, thus facilitating the remedy for decades of discrimination, and the "noneconomic," with its affirmation and advocacy of current and proposed gay lifestyles that are indices not of a liberal society but of its course to social and moral decadence.

The Stonewall uprising of 1969 might have run its course on its economic agenda without any detrimental effects on the religious or moral sensibilities of American society. Tragically along the way it has become polluted with its focus on the Id instead of the refinement of the Ego and the Superego.

Robert Lyon
Professor Emeritus
Temple University
Philadelphia, PA

In the beginning, "The Homosexual Movement" seems to proceed in a reasonable and evenhanded way. The authors—all male, I notice—begin to show their true attitudes and fears when they ask whether a homosexual "predisposition" should be acted on or resisted. Apparently you have no conception of what resisting one's real inner self entails. Such action brings with it spiritual wounding, soul trauma, often physical ailments, alienation from one's soul, one's self. To compare homosexual predisposition to a predisposition to alcoholism, for instance, is to misunderstand totally what it means to be homosexual. Neither am I speaking of

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indulging in promiscuity when I say one cannot resist one's inner self with impunity. I am speaking of denying one's inner self on a much deeper level.

Does the simple fact of two people of the same gender expressing their love in genital sexuality of itself constitute sin? Even in a committed, monogamous, nonexploitive relationship? Having exhaustively studied the passages in the Bible that deal with homosexual acts—not homosexuality, which is the condition of being homosexual—I believe that such a relationship is not sinful. I believe culturally conditioned fear leads to the conclusion that such a relationship would be sinful. Often we read into the Bible what we want to find there. . . .

The authors of the article unwittingly give one revealing reason why it is so difficult to combat the societal fear of homosexuality: "the largely intuitive and pre-articulate anxiety of most Americans regarding homosexuality." Thus, when one presents facts, scientific evidence, logic, and reasonable arguments, such information is not heard. Prejudice and emotion block the hearing of reason in almost all cases.

Under the guise of scholarly interest and sociological information, your publication has contributed significantly to the continued misunderstanding of homosexuality and the mistreatment of lesbian and gay persons. Thus I write to protest the publication of your misinformed and distorted article.

Mary V. Borhek
Bethlehem, PA

The Ramsey Colloquium almost follows the exposition of its investigation to its logical conclusion. But, when the arguments made do not lead to the desired preconceived conclusion—that homosexual conduct is per se evil—the authority of the Bible is invoked and logic rather than the desired conclusion is jettisoned.

The Ramsey argument would have made sense if its purveyors could have admitted that a homosexual couple that behaves the same as its idealized heterosexual counterpart—that is, living together in a loving, long-term monogamous relationship not based primarily on sexual novelty—would fulfill the requirements of morally acceptable behavior. It is rampant promiscuity that is harmful to society because it results in wholesale seduction of the weak by the strong by means of lies, faithlessness, and serial abandonment. Promiscuity is harmful regardless of sexual orientation, but it seems to form such a central part of homosexual relationships that I believe it gives lie to the claim that stable relationships are the norm.

Having made this claim based simply on observation, I would like to ask if any reputable studies have been made on the average duration of homosexual relationships.

Tom Holzel
Concord, MA

I applaud the Ramsey Colloquium commentary on the homosexual movement. It was measured, enlightening, and stimulating. However, it avoided the issue of the essential inability of Christianity, as well as every other religion, to deal with homosexuality.

Homosexuality is something like communism. As in the case of communism, we love the sinner but hate the sin. As with communism, homosexuality has moved from being a personal spiritual problem to being an ideological threat, promulgated not by the numbers under its sway but by a few leaders at the control of language and institutions. In fact, I would term this developing interpretation of society, history, and nature, "homosexualism." As with communism, our best strategy is vigilance and containment, as we develop a superior alternative while it rots from within.

However, as with communism, we cannot claim in all honesty that Christian thinkers have promulgated an explanation of the cause of homosexuality, of what ultimately is wrong with it, and of how to avoid suppression, whether psychological, social, or legal, on the one hand, and unbridled license, on the other. . . .

Logic cannot prove homosexuality evil, nor can the Christian tradition, out of which the insurgency arose, answer it. At this late time, only love will save the world, but "most men's love grows cold." Who among the divorced majority can stone the prostitute, or criticize the homosexual? Are we to argue for the pallid state of marriage, which leaves the society panting for the zestful physical "culture" of youth? . . . Hundreds of thousands of men would not enter upon a path of sure self-destruction if the reality of man-woman love in our culture possessed a modicum of hope or true joy. . . .

I believe that Christians of the medieval times understood themselves as standing in the mid-time between the first and second advents. With the renaissance of the notion of progress, the middle times began to draw to a close. People accepted romantic love as the new norm and sought in it personal satisfaction beyond the function of procreation. It was not long before beloved Luther liberated the nuns and esteemed Locke relegated the institution of marriage to the political function of creating good individualistic citizens. With the blurring of the line between religious and laity came a blurring of all social distinctions, including that of husband and wife, and parent and child.

Paul wrote that in Christ there is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, slave nor free. The separation into Jew and Greek, slave and free, I would submit, are results of the fall, and Paul was right with regard to the rightful ending of those divisions. But Paul was wrong, ultimately, concerning male and female. The separation into male and female is not a result of the fall; it is a principle of creation. In fact, the very image of God is male and female (Genesis 1:27). The male and female in and of God were concretized directly as a man and a woman, who naturally long to reconstitute the unity of God in marriage.

This reconstitution of God's unity by two separated, complementary beings is the Unification model of the Trinity, the three-in-one: God, man, and woman. This is the substantialization of the Father, Son, and Holy

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Spirit, and one should treat every Christian couple as a representation of the Trinity. Hence, the Trinity is life-giving, procreative.

From this viewpoint, ideological homosexuality, or homosexualism, is a denial of God, for it is denying the image of God. One could probably compare it with one or another of the classical heresies that denied the Trinity. Further, any worldview that accepts the balance of forces in nature summarized in the yin/yang duality—a description of multiplicity as subtly comfortable as the Trinity is with the unity of God—cannot countenance the homosexualist one-sided view of man, nature, and God.

Tyler Hendricks
Unification Church of America
New York, NY

"The Homosexual Movement" reflects the usual thinking today, which envisions a static, unchanging world. In actuality, the world is dynamic and, consequently, constantly changing. Lifestyles and mores that were proper and acceptable at one point in time may not be such at another time, and vice versa.

We live on a closed earth with fixed resources and, consequently, undoubted limits on the human population that it can sustain. As we improve personal health so that the average life span keeps lengthening, the earth cannot tolerate an increasing birthrate. The former disdain for contraception and abortion has no validity today if we are to maintain a viable earth.

An extension of the foregoing acceptance of contraception and abortion implies that other nonnormative sexual behavior may deserve consideration as acceptable today. Perhaps homosexuality is a fitting lifestyle in the world as it is today.

In actuality, we need to consider other animate forms of life in which the human reproductive cycle is not present. We need to ask the question, "Why do those animals have that lifestyle? Have they developed a satisfactory perpetuating lifestyle? Will some human beings develop a lifestyle comparable to drones in the apian world? Is homosexuality a natural evolutionary aspect of some members of the human species?"

Sumner B. Irish
Gwynedd, PA

I appreciated the statement by the Ramsey Colloquium because it expresses a serious, reasoned effort to address a difficult issue that challenges all of us. At the same time, I believe there are some critical weaknesses and oversights in the document that should be noted.

Given the significant number of clergy and theologians in the Ramsey Colloquium, it is strange to me that there is no effort to distinguish between the homosexual "movement" and the voices of Christian homosexuals who now for the first time are speaking to the Christian community. The ignoring of those voices is reflected in the way the Colloquium identifies the homosexual agenda as one that espouses sexual gratification without discipline. It is further identified as "a declared desire for liberation from constraint," and the belief that "the fulfillment of desire is the essence of the self." This characterization obviously serves the argument of the Colloquium, but as one who has engaged Christian gays and lesbians in conversation on these matters, I find it seriously flawed.

The issue that holds my attention as a theologian and ethicist is how to address responsibly the situation faced by Christians who happen to be homosexual. While I cannot speak dogmatically on the matter, I have come to the conclusion that the primary issue is the authenticity of their claim concerning their personal identity. Whatever the reason for their sexual condition, the nature and scope of their relationships are governed by their being homosexually oriented, and that is a fact which heterosexuals should respect. We may not understand that fact, or may be uncomfortable with it, but if our society is going to treat gays and lesbians justly, we must respect it.

Recognizing this, I also believe that we should expect the same kind of responsible sexual practice from gays and lesbians as we expect from heterosexuals. The implication given by the Colloquium's statement is that the homosexual world is not interested in or possibly not capable of establishing responsible sexual relationships. The fact of the matter is that we do not know how responsible most homosexuals would become in a society in which they were treated as first-class citizens and expected to establish open, permanent relationships. I want my fellow Christians who are homosexual to have that opportunity, with the legal support necessary to help make it happen.

Would such a development undermine the family and increase the seduction of minors? I'm inclined to believe that it would create a more healthy sexual environment. The "otherness" of the homosexual—with its attendant fear and even hatred—would lose some of its threat, and it is likely that a "live and let live" attitude would increasingly prevail. When the justice issue is defused, the impetus for confrontation and flaunting is also defused. Of course, the norm for heterosexual behavior should be taught and exemplified, just as it should for homosexual behavior. The kind of argument made by the Colloquium concerning "the heterosexual norm" can and must be maintained, but without denying the authenticity of homosexual persons for whom homogenital activity is a natural expression of who they are. To claim that they also must act like heterosexuals in order to meet the norm is to continue an expectation that has brought incalculable tragedy and grief into millions of families. There has to be a better way.

To find that way does indeed mean a departure from the moral tradition of the Church, but it is one based on a plea for humaneness and understanding. The departure is not one that replaces discipline with permissiveness, and certainly not one that forsakes morality for immorality. Instead it redefines responsible sexual conduct for the homosexual in the same way we define it for the heterosexual: Live your sexual life in union with another person in a spirit of commitment and fidelity. The alter-

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native which insists that celibacy is the only responsible behavior open to homosexuals is an act of coercion that the rest of us would find utterly unconscionable. It reflects the lack of respect needed by the homosexual world in order to enter the mainstream and live the responsible life expected by society.

Paul Jersild
Columbia, SC

I wish to commend the Ramsey Colloqium for addressing a difficult and controverted subject—the homosexual movement. This is a difficult subject to speak to, since we all, I suspect, know and love individuals with a homosexual orientation who are struggling to integrate their sexuality into their personal lives in service to the true God. Yet both Judaism and Christianity must continue to uphold that vision of humanity with which they have been entrusted.

The significant weakness of the Ramsey statement is its failure to amply express the singularity of the Judeo-Christian understanding of human sexuality. The Judeo-Christian condemnation of homosexual practice (and it is homosexual intercourse that is condemned in Scripture, not homosexual orientation) belongs to an understanding of humanity that is specific to the biblical revelation. Few cultures and religions have condemned the practice of homosexuality in the way that Judaism and Christianity have. It can in fact be argued that the very distinction between heterosexual and homosexual practice is a Jewish-Christian distinction. In pagan cultures of antiquity, the fundamental distinction was between active and passive, with the former role affirmed and the latter denigrated. Most cultures, therefore, have permitted if not celebrated homosexual practice—as long as one engaged in the act of penetration and was not the one being penetrated. (Note that women must always be denigrated in this understanding.) Judaism and Christianity transformed all this by their insistence that sexual union is restricted to the heterosexual bond of husband and wife. In other words, they "maritalized" sex and thus made possible a new kind of relationship between man and woman—a relationship of love and fidelity.

I grant that this teaching is especially tough on single men and women. I also know a lot of married men and women who believe that our proscriptions of adultery and divorce are also destructive to personal well-being. Once again, most cultures have never been as absolute on this as Judaism and Christianity have. But of course Christianity has never accepted the belief, widely accepted by our culture, that sexual union is necessary to personal fulfillment. It can hardly do so in light of the personal example of Jesus and the insistence of the Church upon the holiness of the vocation of singleness and celibacy (which distinguishes the Church, I believe, from her mother community, Judaism).

The Judeo-Christian proscription of homosexual practice is not based on a few isolated biblical texts but is grounded in a vision of what it means to be a human being. This vision will always be countercultural and unpopular. I am reminded here of the disciples' response to the teaching of Jesus on marriage and divorce in Matthew 19:1-14: "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." In his typical manner, Jesus does not back off from his teaching: "Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given." Synagogue and Church are thus called to a difficult vocation—a vocation that can only be served under the mercy of God and in his compassion and love—yet surely we must remain faithful to the revelation we have received.

(The Rev.) Alvin F. Kimel, Jr.
St. Mark's Church
Highland, MD

I have followed the often very fine theological discussion in FIRST THINGS almost from its inception. As a Catholic who attempts to be faithful to the Church, and as an historical theologian-in-training, I frequently nod in agreement as I read. Nevertheless, your journal offers the same frustration on an almost monthly basis—your virtual obsession with homosexuality and gay and lesbian civil rights. If anything, the frequency of tirades, snide remarks, and other treatments of this subject has increased of late.

The various articles on homosexuality in FIRST THINGS have, of course, not been without value. They clearly articulate points to which anyone advocating change must reply. However, three failings stand out:

(a) Constant complaints about "special rights." No doubt there are some gay activists whose positions veer in this direction, and they are rightly criticized. However, the excesses of these few do not invalidate or represent the deeply thoughtful and responsible positions of many others.

(b) The implication that no reasonable, orthodox Christian could question the traditional stance on homosexuality. The Church, under the leading of the Spirit, has changed positions that had traditional and even biblical support, for example the permissibility of slavery. Were theologians wrong to question this teaching? Raising careful and respectful questions is not heresy, but rather is an indispensable activity in the Church.

(c) Worst of all, the tone of superiority and self-righteousness often found in your articles on this topic. A little humility can go a long way, especially when dealing with the difficult issues of life and love that gay and lesbian Christians face daily.

I would suggest giving your readers a break by maintaining silence on this issue for a while. In your resultant spare time, you could volunteer at an agency like New York's Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project. These folks assist those who have been beaten, thrown out of their homes, and otherwise mistreated only because they were perceived, correctly or not, as homosexual. "Which now of these . . . was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?" (Luke 10:36)

John P. Plummer
Nashville, TN

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About John Boswell

Thank you for creating what is simply the best periodical in the U.S. today. It truly is.

Allow me one observation on the superb piece "In the Case of John Boswell" (Public Square, March). One should beware of saying: "Paul and the early Christians departed from the Greeks in judging homosexual acts per se to be unnatural and morally disordered." That overlooks Plato's explicit strictures in his *Laws* I (page 40, Loeb): Sexual relations are "contrary to nature when male with male or female with female. . . . We [Athenians?] all accuse the Cretans for concocting the story of Ganymede . . . to justify their own practice." VIII (page 132): "Intercourse with men and boys as with women . . . is unnatural." See also pages 153 and 158. On page 159 Plato seems to equate homosexual practice with killing off the human stock. . . . On page 107 he confines sex to marital intercourse and prohibits what he terms "unnatural seed" in the practice of homosexuality. Does Boswell somehow write all this off?

I always look forward to every issue.

James Whitmore
Lehman College
Bronx, NY

Father Neuhaus' discussion of homosexuality in the context of John Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance & Homosexuality* was, as usual, perceptive, reasoned, and balanced. As a guide for Christian belief and social action, however, it fell short at the precise point where Christianity generally has lost authority today.

1 Corinthians 6:9 is quoted: "Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God." Boswell would separate out homosexuals for exclusion or redefinition. But a church that has easily accepted, approved, and even ordained the immoral and adulterers, not to mention revilers, the greedy, and the drunken, has lost its authority to quote these passages against homosexuals.

This is not to question either God's truth or God's authority. But first cleansing our own denominational houses of selective reading and preaching would go a long way toward establishing credence for our proclamations of eternal truth.

D. T. Samuel
St. Cloud, MN

Are Postmoderns Moderns?

The article by J. Bottum, "Christians and Postmoderns" (February), perpetuates what I believe to be an error on the part of a growing number of believing intellectuals. This error is the view that "postmodernism" is good news for Christians, or at least that it can be put to good use by us. On the contrary, I would maintain:

> (1) That there is in fact no such thing as "postmodernism," but that the ideas of such thinkers as Derrida, Foucault, and Jameson (to name the three used by Bottum) are merely logical extensions of modernity;
>
> (2) That the actual ideas engaged by Bottum in his article, if accepted, rather than constituting a foundation upon which to erect a ladder of divine ascent, are far more likely to form a diving board that will provide a brief instant of euphoria as one leaps upward, only to plunge a moment later into the bottomless depths of the void below.

Bottum establishes, or rather accepts whole cloth from the "postmodernists" themselves, a three-fold scheme of intellectual history: medieval faith, modern rationality, postmodern antirationality. Every stage in this putative evolution is misrepresented. To begin with, the medieval scholastics always considered faith and reason to work together. Indeed, certain of their theological propositions may even have prepared the ground for the discovery of the laws of physics, as argued by Pierre Duhem and his contemporary interpreter, Stanley Jaki. . . .

It ought not to be such a surprise that while modernity indeed begins in a reaction against the Church, as Bottum correctly states, its voracious appetite for rebellion would eventually devolve into a reaction against being itself. At least as early as Bishop Berkeley we have the view that only perceptions exist—sustained in the mind by God, to be sure. Amazingly, a bishop of the Church of England in the eighteenth century was already subscribing to an ontology closer to that of Buddhism than to Christianity, which has always accepted the ontological solidity of the world. That is why when Samuel Johnson kicked the rock to refute Berkeley, he was also giving the riposte to Descartes and in fact to the entire modern/postmodern enterprise. We *know* the world exists. When we speculate about it, and end up convincing ourselves that we cannot know that it exists, we are falling into a fundamental philosophical error, as Etienne Gilson (referred to by Bottum) demonstrated in *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (1937):

> If metaphysical speculation is a shooting at the moon, philosophers have always begun by shooting at it; only after missing it have they said that there was no moon, and that it was a waste of time to shoot at it.

But the claim that it is a waste of time is precisely the "postmodernist" claim of Derrida, Rorty, et al., here refuted decades before they even published.

To characterize modernism as "systematic rationality," as Bottum does, following the self-styled "postmodernists," is to engage in reductionism. Modernity has always had an antinomian, willful rebelliousness about it; it has also raised the "feelings" to giddy heights, hence the seemingly bizarre combination of sentimentality and absolutized skepticism. Foucault and company, by declaring themselves to be *post*modern, have set up a straw man against

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whom to pose as courageous rebels. In fact, since at least the seventeenth century we have a parting of the ways between those who believe in God and those who do not (or are taking epistemological steps that will eventually lead to disbelief), a parting that continues in our century. Instead of making peace with the "postmoderns," we should be singing the praises of the great thinkers from the seventeenth century on who are on our side. And I would argue in favor of making common cause with nonbelievers who nevertheless accept the essential reality of the world, today more likely to be found among scientists than among "humanists." If one accepts the reality of the world, there is hope that a higher aspect of reality will eventually also be accepted.

But there is another reason for rejecting the thinkers Bottum apparently accepts, one that is more difficult to characterize. Allow me to wax personal for a moment. When I read—or attempt to read—Derrida and Co., in English or, if they are French, in the original, I am instantly repelled by something I can only describe as putrescent. I intuit that I am in the presence of something ugly—even evil. Is my intuition merely subjective?

Jonathan Chaves
Professor of Chinese Literature
George Washington University
Washington, D.C.

J. Bottum provides a lucid account of relations among postmodern, modern, and premodern philosophies. His argument that postmodern deconstructions of modernity allow Christians to resume the long-interrupted search for understanding is compelling. Yet Bottum admits an irony in our situation that appears inescapable: we are creatures and beneficiaries of modernity. "[M]y own modernness rises up to make me blush," he writes. "We cannot revert to the premodern, we cannot revert to the age of faith, for we were all of us raised moderns."

Modernness is shared alike by moderns, contemporary postmoderns, and those who see in premoderns a fullness of life and faith. For example, wherever we may differ on natural law and natural right, on metaphysical foundations of ethics, most of us tend to live as though there are some self-evident truths. Ask anyone: they affirm liberty and political equality; they oppose tyranny and oppression; most are committed to private property.

Postmoderns themselves are at the forefront of testing the limits of rights that modernity defined. But their commitment to rights should not be confused with belief in or knowledge of rights. Genuine belief and knowledge are incompatible with presuppositions of postmodernism. A world where value systems are fictions, where commitment to these fictions is arbitrary, where these fictions are necessarily enforced by the willful is not the world of civil rights or women's rights or "rights" at all, coherently understood. The liberalesque rhetoric of contemporary postmoderns and modern liberalism are two very different things.

To what extent, however, are Christianity and modern liberalism two very different things? Part of the challenge for Christians today is to understand how a truly Christian social and political vision differs from those born of modernity. Thomas Aquinas and John Locke offer competing visions; both present themselves as Christian thinkers. One may be orthodox and the other heretical. Yet such a distinction cannot lessen modern appreciation for goods stemming from the Enlightenment rationalism of Locke's era as diverse as the Declaration of Independence and the refrigerator. Christians must understand how a bankrupt epoch that went wrong in fundamental ways went right in many other ways, and vice versa. A "bankruptcy" (Bottum's term) that relieves man's estate is paradoxical. Fortunately there are some who address the paradox. John Paul II, for one, comes to mind.

Todd Flanders
Claremont, CA

J. Bottum replies:

We cannot assume what Professor Chaves calls the "essential reality of the world." Yes, there is "essential reality": our minds are full of essential beings, some of them "idols" (as Bacon said) and some of them "clear and distinct" (as Descartes said). And yes, there is the "reality of the world": when Dr. Johnson stubs his toe, existential being cries out against the bishop. But the *connection* between them is our problem: I apparently conceive essences and I apparently perceive existences, and I haven't a clue what they have to do with each other—for these are the "two principles which I cannot render consistent," as Hume puts it, "nor is it in my power to renounce either."

Of course, a perfect, infinite, and non-deceiving God could connect them; modern epistemology would be off to the races if we could prove God's existence. But Kant points out what Aquinas saw five hundred years before: existence will not flow from concepts; from the fact we think of things a certain way, it does not follow they are that way.

Now, suppose we had a group of modern nonbelievers, say some atheistic but good-willed physicists of vaguely humanistic sentiment: We could show them something quite surprising: their everyday speech and technical practice both require the concept of god. Most of them would simply laugh (the notion of logical requirement to thought outside of science being alien to contemporary culture); but suppose there were one or two who would listen—those one or two in the hopes of whom C. S. Lewis always wrote. What would we have done? The last people left in modern times who still believe in the "essential reality of the world" would now see that their belief requires the hypothesis of a "useful" god. Such a god is an idol and a blasphemy; I can't believe we gain anything by positing its existence. And the history of modernity shows us what we lose.

Hypothesis is the ape of faith, for the posited god confirms complacency while the believed God demands conversion. And the person who posits god eventually grows tired: tired of revelation's contradiction of complacency, tired of all the chatter about what is only a construct, tired

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of what is irrelevant at last to everyday life. This, and not the paradox of wealthy bankruptcy, is the origin of the irony on which Mr. Flanders insists: misology and acedia—the weariness of words and the weariness of action—are the final products of the modern attempt to ignore God and get on with words and action. The postmoderns are epistemologically correct: modern claims of truth and morals are parasitical on a god who withers at last and dies—and with it dies truth and morals. We don't get God from the world; our knowledge of the "essential reality of the world" flows instead from belief in God.

Of Politics and Religion

In his article "Christian Conviction & Democratic Etiquette" (March), George Weigel applauds the fact that President Clinton is "unabashedly public about his Christian faith and seems to understand that the engagement of differing religious connections within the bond of democratic civilities is good for America." He tempers his praise by adding that the President's policies and appointments are not entirely congruent with his rhetoric. He further appears to justify this incongruity by saying, "Politicians will always be politicians." In trying to prove his thesis that there should be a place for religiously based moral arguments in the public square, he uses as an example a man whose biblical words are a mockery to his actions in the presidency. The immediacy of Mr. Clinton's revocation of the hard-won gains in the pro-life movement, his timing of this with the annual pro-life march on Washington, and his blatant disregard for protests of his policies show an unprecedented callousness toward the rights of the unborn. Again, his appointments testify to a political agenda that is in total contradiction to the moral values he glibly professes.

The dichotomy between the words of President Clinton and his actions is so marked that one can only wonder whether he is quoting Scripture for his own political purposes. "Politicians will always be politicians" is a surprising statement for Mr. Weigel to make in view of his aim to help in the reconstruction of civil society in America at the close of the twentieth century. A sincere declaration of religious belief should presuppose a desire to act in accordance with that belief, and there is nothing in Mr. Clinton's performance that demonstrates this. It was also surprising to see the juxtaposition of Mr. Clinton's biblical references with those of President Lincoln during his presidency, our sixteenth President's timeless utterances springing from his innate goodness and flowing forth into just actions. We can rebuild our nation only by electing men of principle whose actions do not belie their words, for as St. Paul wrote, "The man of eloquence who speaks without love is like a gong booming or a cymbal clashing." The words of our current President are without love, for love can only pour out in deeds that are good. If we listen carefully, I think we can hear the booming of gongs and the clashing of cymbals in the biblical speeches of our President, and this should make us wary of mere talk in the public square.

Hortense Cupo
Staten Island, NY

George Weigel says much that is true and valuable. Religious people should not be told to sit down and shut up when our convictions touch politics, and there is no reason why we should comply if someone undertakes to do so. And natural law provides a promising "grammar" for discussing public issues without ruling out religiously motivated perspectives.

Nonetheless, the project of invoking religion to stabilize American society has distinct limitations. For our society is in chaos for many reasons independent of secularizing intellectuals. These include the moral deficit remaining from the Cold War—including the legacy of forty years poised on the brink of destroying the whole human race, or at least countless innocent lives, and the gap created by the departed "Evil Empire." They also include an economy in which layoffs and plant closings disrupt many communities, and, for those lucky enough to remain employed, the price is often an out-of-state move.

Religion is likely to take its color from the surrounding society. This is especially true in America, which has always nourished religious movements that Europeans regard as strange. We have Amish and Baptists inherited from the radical Reformation, Christian Scientists and Mormons from the nineteenth century, and New Age people and Moonies from the sixties, as well as many groups more eccentric still. And a society of immigrants must now deal not only with Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox people, and practicing Jews; but with Buddhists, Hindus, and Moslems as well.

Religion is and always will be an important force in American politics. But religious people will raise a wider range of issues, and take a wider range of positions, than FIRST THINGS perhaps desires.

Philip E. Devine
Professor of Philosophy
Providence College
Providence, RI

George Weigel leaves me wondering about the paradox of a democracy so swollen that it now lays claim to the social and generative process itself. Since entering the political fray, radical multiculturism and the extreme movements of gender and sexual politics have paved inroads into social and cultural matters. From strongholds within education, legal theory, and government social policy they strike at the core of Western Christian values and subvert the source of our collective social and psychic upbringing. The result is bringing down the framework of an American civic and spiritual consensus which, we are now realizing, depended on a principled attenuation of the political. Thus I ask Mr. Weigel whether some righteous resistance to "democracy" isn't after all necessary to ultimately save us from ourselves.

Richard Sorrentino
Ocean Grove, NJ

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Hierarchy, Anarchy & Animal Rights

Philip Zaleski ("A Peculiar Little Test," February) is sure to receive some severe criticism for the bold stance he has taken with regard to hierarchy; he might as well have suggested to the frenzied Israelites that the golden calf they commissioned Aaron to make was ugly. There are certain things the entrenched intelligentsia of our society will simply not let one challenge, certain zones that are off-limits. Chief among them is the tenet that authoritarianism in all its forms is wrong, taboo, fascist. The intellectuals have exerted decades of effort attempting to enlighten us about this, so they certainly are not about to be cowed by one neophyte contributor to this publication, unless the subscription list is far more parochial than I thought.

Professor Zaleski is right, of course, which is why the Ten Commandments may not be posted in our schools any longer (for they teach submission to God and honor to father and mother), and why justice cannot convict criminals any longer. Both the acquittal of Lorena Bobbitt and the hung jury in the Menendez trial give evidence of an unsettling new trend, a newfound refusal on the part of jurors to put themselves hierarchically above the accused, notwithstanding the orders of the court. How else can one explain a failure to get a guilty verdict in two cases of self-admittedly premeditated assault on victims unaware even of the presence of their assailants? The arguments that the victims themselves are guilty of heinous acts can only be supported on the assumption that vigilantism has now become acceptable, further indicating a rejection of hierarchy in all its forms.

Western society and its denizens have become increasingly uncomfortable with all forms of authority, and one can make a believable case for the notion that we stand at the brink of anarchy, where no authority obtains. No wonder the jails are overcrowded; no wonder we have of late become alarmed about the rate of crime. . . . And if the people's will has been stripped of its reverence for authority in society, then they will no longer be capable of serving as jurors in the interest of law and order.

We have been duped into rejecting hierarchy altogether by those who point to the abuses one can always find. Perhaps the cure at which Professor Zaleski gropes will have to begin, therefore, with education in another simple dictum, aimed at answering the gainsayers in this regard: *abusus non tollit usus.*

(The Rev.) Burnell F. Eckardt, Jr.
St. John Lutheran Church
Berlin, WI

As a generally conservative subscriber to FIRST THINGS who is also a thoroughgoing skeptic, I read your journal with the expectation of agreeing with much, as well as the expectation of having usually fruitful disagreements. Philip Zaleski's article contains an example of something I frequently encounter in the writings of conservative and/or religious people and with which I utterly, unfruitfully disagree, viz., a gratuitous, irrational slam at "extreme animal rightists."

Zaleski's use of the word "extreme" is telling, for presumably he does not dissent from anticruelty laws. Yet when these were first proposed in the early nineteenth century, proponents of these laws were tarred with the epithet "extremist," as are those who today defend the rights of animals. And, I might add, so were the proponents of the abolition of slavery. Zaleski notes that "the great religions answer with one voice: all human life is infinitely precious." Leaving to one side the question of the truth of that statement (consider Islam's contempt for women), or whether that statement is analytic or synthetic, there are two "great religions," Hinduism and Buddhism, that hold animal life just as sacred as human. That fact argues their superiority to Christianity and Judaism, at least to my way of thinking, which will no doubt offend your ecumenical sensibilities.

Zaleski's talk of "hierarchy" and "the Great Chain of Being," aside from its dubious philosophical validity, conceals a gigantic non sequitur: because man is higher in the hierarchy, he has a right to do whatever he likes to those lower. Because man is more intelligent, or more "spiritual," he has the right to tear animals away from their mates and offspring, and coldly murder them for our supper? Because man has an immortal soul, he has a right to torture and vivisect? Not by any logic of which I've heard. Whoever invented these syllogisms never studied Aristotle, who happens to be the champion of "hierarchy."

I will never cease to be amazed by so-called Christians who, with all of their talk about love and compassion, never allow these to stand in the way of a tasty dinner. These Christians, in their willful ignorance and bigotry, know nothing of the religious tradition of compassion for and mercy to animals, from Pythagoras to St. Francis to Albert Schweitzer to Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, all of whom were vegetarians. Animals are *exactly* like humans in one great respect: they want to live, above all else. All the "great religions" also teach this: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. How can we, as Plutarch says, "for the sake of some little mouthful of flesh deprive a soul of the sun and light, and of that proportion of life and time it had been born into the world to enjoy"?

The way animals are currently treated will one day be considered barbarous. As for Christians, who ought to know better, the words of Jesus come to mind, something about Pharisees and hypocrites. For all of their talk of the "image of God" and "the Great Chain of Being" is just an excuse to keep conducting business as usual.

Dennis Mangan
Redwood Valley, CA

Philip Zaleski replies:

Many thanks to both Pastor Burnell F. Eckardt, Jr. and Dennis Mangan for their thorough responses to my article.

Pastor Eckardt's final suggestion is right on target and brings to mind a simple folk proverb: don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. But what to do when the bathtub itself is in the process of being disassembled

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(or should I say deconstructed)? This is the dilemma in which we find ourselves today.

I admire Mr. Mangan's compassion for our bestial brethren, but perhaps a more nuanced view of world religions is called for. Although it can be argued that, in some cases, Hinduism and Buddhism "hold animal life just as sacred as human," hierarchical distinctions remain. Both of these religions describe rebirth into animal form as inauspicious, the result of a failure to sow seeds of merit in a previous life; human rebirth offers the most favorable conditions for attaining liberation. Turning westward, I'll note that profound respect for animals, even to the extent of perceiving them as heavenly messengers, in no way proscribes putting them on one's dinner plate, hot and juicy—witness the hunting practices of most Native American peoples.

As for Mr. Mangan's comment about "Islam's contempt for women," this is sadly typical of the denigration of Islam in America today. Islam has misogynist tendencies, as do all religions, east and west. But Islam raised the status of women from chattel to God's viceregents, along with men (Quran: II, 30), and Islamic tradition venerates thousands of female saints. Scarcely signs of contempt.

Whose Religion?

I was both confused and disturbed by Richard Neuhaus' commentary, "Clinton on Religious Freedom" (Public Square, March). He likes what Clinton says, but then appears to claim that in his actions the President is against religion. "On the issues that really matter to many people—abortion, population control policies, sex education and family values, school choice—Clinton is . . . hard-line. . . ." As many religious people and denominations agree with Clinton on these issues, how do those policies make him antireligious? There are devout members of what you like to call "Mainline" churches who support Clinton on these issues as strongly as other denominations oppose him.

No President can fail to offend various religious groups, some most of the time, and almost all at least occasionally. That does not make him antireligious. . . .

Peter B. Denison
Somerset, MA

Fumbling Incumbents

In Richard John Neuhaus' interesting article on Poland ("Poland: Reflections on a New World," February), he speculated concerning the disappointing victory of the left that "it is part of democratic 'normality' to screw up and lose from time to time." I think he was more precisely right than he may have realized.

Retrospective voters decide elections, as James Q. Wilson and other political scientists have pointed out. An overwhelming majority of people vote *against* or *for* the incumbents; in effect, elections are particularly ruthless job performance reviews. Thus, in 1993 in Poland, around 80 percent of the voters cast ballots *against* the center-right incumbent parties. Of the dozen or so alternative parties among whom the electorate scattered its largess, the ex-Communists were the best-organized and the best-known, and they won the plurality required to gain a majority of seats in the parliament. Somehow the Democratic Union and its allies dropped the ball, and the voters sent in a new team.

Democracy is the best system known to man for removing bad rulers from power, but it is only a very crude tool for discriminating among challengers. If the incumbents fumble, just about any party or candidate has a shot, no matter what its past record may be. Just look at that very lucky man, Bill Clinton.

Stephanie D. Moussalli
Pensacola, FL

Prejudice?

With regard to Richard John Neuhaus and his attempt to defend religious freedom from the attacks of the Wisconsin Civil Rights Bureau ("Getting Tough on Crime in Wisconsin," Public Square, March):

The derision with which you dismiss nondiscrimination requirements in public accommodation is astounding. I can see no religious impulse for defending, let alone advocating, a rejection of these protections. Would you have so gleefully defended a housing ad which said, "whites only," if placed by a white supremacist seeking religious approbation? Perhaps you can smile at such quaint and simple pieties as using "Christian" to mean "reliable," but if Ms. Schnell meant "reliable," she should have said "reliable." What she said was that I, as a Jew, need not bother to apply.

I do not know the particulars of this case; whether, for example, the landlady was seeking someone to live in a spare room in her home, or if she managed a large apartment complex. Obviously there is a difference, just as there is a difference between a religious organization advertising for employees and a property owner seeking tenants. But I cannot imagine that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act could be reasonably construed to include renting real estate. This is not the practice of religion.

I don't know if the punishment is appropriate to the crime or not; perhaps the fine is excessive. Perhaps what Ms. Schnell really needs, in addition to a better editor for her advertisements, is a pastoral lesson in the rudiments of ecumenism, not endorsements of prejudice.

(Rabbi) Dan Shevitz
Emmanuel Synagogue
Oklahoma City, OK

Not His Cup of Tea

You advertised your magazine as a balanced treatment of social issues in the context of religious belief. It is anything *but* balanced. FIRST THINGS, A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life, is pure evil. It would be better described as A Journal of Greed and Bigotry in the name of Jesus Christ. Its editors must surely be agents of Satan.

Please cancel my new subscription immediately and send my refunded payment to your local Salvation Army corps.

Stephen Atkins
Blacksburg, VA

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Opinion

In the Case of Martha Nussbaum

Gerard V. Bradley

Almost four years ago I wrote in these pages about a pro-choice legal brief signed by 281 American historians and submitted by New York University law professor Sylvia Law to the Supreme Court in the 1989 *Webster* case ("Academic Integrity Betrayed," August/September 1990). The brief's two central claims—that abortion was not illegal at common law and that only recently has the moral value of the unborn become a motivating concern of abortion opponents—were false. Key signatories knew, or had ample reason to know, that they were false. The brief relied at critical points on James Mohr's *Abortion in America: The Origins and Evolution of National Policy, 1800-1900*. But Mohr's book actually *contradicted* the claims it was mustered to support. Despite that, Mohr himself signed the brief. When I challenged him on it, Mohr said that he stood by his book wherever its conclusions differed from the brief's. He nevertheless defended his endorsement of the brief's arguments. He signed the brief, he said, as a "citizen" concerned to protect the legal right to abortion, not as a "scholar" whose goal was to present an accurate account of the historical facts.

Professor Law also acknowledged the brief's "serious deficiencies" as truth telling. One "deficiency" was the drafters' conscious decision not to tell the Court that most nineteenth-century feminists supported laws restricting access to abortion. It appears, however, that Professor Law has not repented. She put together a substantially similar brief and filed it in *Casey v. Planned Parenthood*, the 1992 decision reaffirming *Roe v. Wade*. One prominent *Webster* signatory did not sign the *Casey* brief: James Mohr.

Professor Law conceded in a published defense of "advocacy history" that she thinks it wiser to use historians in a written brief rather than in "live testimony, which is subject to cross-examination." No wonder. Had James Mohr, for example, testified under oath to what he subscribed to in the brief, the question of perjury would be raised. At a minimum, cross-examination of someone such as Mohr would neutralize his value as a witness by the simple expedient of asking him to read aloud from his own publications. (Needless to say, these were not Professor Law's published reasons for her preference for briefs.)

The *Webster* and *Casey* briefs were not submitted under oath. When I reported on the misrepresentations made to the Court in the former brief, I did not imagine that even the most fervent "advocacy scholar" would cross the line and commit simple perjury. If he or she would not be dissuaded by ethical considerations, surely pragmatic self-interest would preclude such a course of action.

Second thoughts are forced upon me by the October 1993 trial of Colorado's Amendment 2. Adopted by popular vote in November 1992, the amendment would have prohibited laws making gay, lesbian, or bisexual conduct or orientation a ground for "minority status, quota preferences, protected status, or claim of discrimination." The amendment was challenged on the ground that it violates the federal Constitution. Central to the litigation is the question whether moral opposition to homosexual conduct is necessarily based on "mere prejudice" or revealed religious teaching or some other constitutionally impermissible ground, or whether such opposition can instead be grounded in principles for which plausible philosophical reasons can be adduced (the "rational basis" test).

Homosexual activists protested the amendment as a license for "gay bashing." A *New York Times* editorial even said that it turned gays into "nonpersons." Hardly. The point of Amendment 2 is that *precisely as such* gays and lesbians enjoy no *special* status. Its import was to overthrow ordinances enacted by liberal enclaves such as Denver and Aspen which had, for example, made it an offense for landlords to act on their conscientious moral and religious beliefs if these beliefs prevented them from renting to couples or groups whose manifest intention was to engage in homosexual practices.

A Denver trial court enjoined enforcement of Amendment 2 before its effective date, on the ground that it violated the United States Constitution. Last summer the Colorado Supreme Court upheld the injunction in what the *Times* hailed as a "creative" opinion. One has come to understand, however, that any judicial opinion, especially one concerning gay rights, that strikes the *Times* as "creative" is probably contrived and unconvincing. In this case, it is also incoherent. The full-scale lawsuit over constitutionality was tried in October 1993 before Judge Jeffrey Bayless. He concluded, in an opinion issued December 14, 1993, that Amendment 2 was unconstitutional. He made the preliminary injunction permanent. The case is now on appeal to the Supreme Court of Colorado. An appeal from there to the United States Supreme Court is likely.

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Judge Bayless rested his decision upon what he described, following the Colorado Supreme Court injunction, as a Fourteenth Amendment right not to be "fenced out" of the political process. Because certain laws that gays might "desire" were ruled out by Amendment 2, Bayless asserted, they were disenfranchised. A reviewing court—say, the United States Supreme Court—may very well determine that "creativity" has here crossed the line into fantasy. In that event, the challenge to Amendment 2 will turn upon the "rational basis" test.

This familiar constitutional standard has served the gay rights cause well. District of Columbia Circuit Judge Abner Mikva overturned the Naval Academy's dismissal of a gay midshipman on its authority. Judge Terry Hatter relied on it last year when he restored sailor Keith Meinhold to active Navy duty. In each case, the decisive move was the judge's *assertion* (not conclusion, for it followed no argument at all) that opposition to the gay claimant was mere prejudice without a rational basis. In Hatter's words, the opposition was "baseless" and the product of "cultural myths and false stereotypes." Judge Bayless distinguished a "rational" basis from "prejudice" and from reasons that are religious in nature.

The question posed by the rational basis test is this: Is there a plausible secular philosophical argument for Amendment 2? The parties to the lawsuit produced testimony and sworn statements from some of the most distinguished academics of the English-speaking world on precisely that point. Testifying for the existence of a "rational basis" were Harvard Professor of Government Harvey Mansfield and Princeton legal philosopher and U.S. Civil Rights Commissioner Robert P. George. Oxford moral and legal philosopher John Finnis, visiting this year at Boston College, submitted the fullest statement—a lengthy, sworn affidavit—in support. On the other side, Stephen Macedo of Harvard offered testimony against the Amendment, as did Martha Nussbaum, Brown University Professor of Philosophy, Classics, and Comparative Literature, and recently Visiting Professor at Chicago Law School. Nussbaum is also a long-time consultant to the United Nations on matters of moral philosophy and public policy, and was chosen to deliver the highly prestigious Gifford Lectures.

This is the story of Martha Nussbaum's part in the Colorado trial. The reader will want to keep in mind the distinction between advocacy and scholarship, assuming there is still such a distinction in the contemporary academy. Equally important for this story are distinctions between misstatement, misrepresentation, and deliberate falsehood.

The testimony and sworn statements at the trial focused at length on the judgments of classical authors, particularly Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle, on sodomy. Both sides recognized that if these writers—committed as they were to reasoned analysis of moral questions, and untouched by the monotheistic faiths that shape our religious commitments—argued against and condemned sodomy, then a rational basis very likely exists. In his affidavit, Finnis contended that, despite an upper-class ideology of same-sex (and specifically man-boy) "romantic relationships," the public morality of Athens in the fourth century B.C. treated sexual conduct between males as involving at least one of the parties in something shameful, unnatural, and wrong. Finnis argued that Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle regarded homosexual *conduct* as shameful and immoral. He set forth what he considered to be a central insight of these philosophers, as of other thinkers unaffected by Christianity (notably the Roman Stoic Musonius Rufus and Plutarch), that homosexual and other nonmarital sex acts are incapable of participating in, actualizing, or truly expressing the intimacy and good of friendship.

In her first filing, Nussbaum declared that "in all of these [pre-Christian Mediterranean] traditions and civilizations, same-sex romantic relationships, attachments, and sexual conduct were highly regarded. . . . Such relationships were never considered shameful. . . . Thus, prior to the Christian tradition, there is no evidence that natural law theories regarded same-sex erotic attachments as immoral, 'unnatural,' or improper."

Nussbaum then testified in court and repeated her claim that, in "Greek culture of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., and on, really, through to the first century A.D. where Christianity starts to have a big impact, homosexual acts between consenting males, and in rarer cases between consenting females, are attested as received with great approval." This amounts to a simple disagreement with Finnis. By itself, this *sustains* Amendment 2. Its defenders do not have to show that Finnis (for example) is right and that Nussbaum is wrong. Amendment 2 needs merely *a* rational basis, not *the* unequivocal verdict of reason. Its opponents needed to do more than rebut Finnis' account of the classical writers. They needed to show that his account is unreasonable or incompetent—not just debatable or inadequate.

Nussbaum tried to destroy Finnis' contentions by saying that his moral argument was a sectarian Catholic view without foundation in the secular and rational "natural law" views of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. She rejected Finnis' appeal to Plato on the ground that it relied on English translations which falsified Plato's texts. In reality, she maintained, neither Socrates nor Plato nor Aristotle had moral objections to homosexual conduct that did not involve coercion, prostitution, or the seduction of students. She repeatedly drew attention to her mastery of the classical languages and intimate familiarity with the classical texts, implying (falsely) that Finnis has access to

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classical writers only in translation. She went on: "I have to say that Finnis is no classicist. He's a distinguished philosopher and religious authority, but he has no training in classics, and he has access to the ancient texts only through translations. He's made a pretty cursory examination even of those. . . ."

Robert George of Princeton then gave evidence contending that the translations which Finnis had quoted were confirmed by translations of the same passages given by classicists accepted by Nussbaum as highly authoritative. Such classicists include Sir Kenneth Dover, the author of the leading book on Greek homosexuality and, according to Nussbaum herself, a "giant" in the field. Moreover, George argued that Nussbaum had misrepresented both Dover and Finnis.

The decisive engagement was joined.

On the last day of the trial, Nussbaum filed an affidavit in which twenty-four single-spaced pages are devoted to these issues. On the same day, Finnis filled an affidavit of twenty-four double-spaced pages in rebuttal of Nussbaum's oral testimony. George filed a short affidavit rebutting points made against his testimony in the first twelve paragraphs of Nussbaum's affidavit. She had sent him those (but only those) paragraphs the previous day, together with a letter demanding that he retract his claims that she had misrepresented Finnis and Dover.

Nussbaum made some rather remarkable statements in court. In denying the validity of Finnis' reading of Plato's *Gorgias*, she directed the court to her "lengthier discussion of the [disputed] passage in [her] *The Fragility of Goodness*, ch. 5." Presumably, she assumed that the judge would not go and look up the citation, for it turns out that chapter 5 of *The Fragility of Goodness* supports Finnis. In that chapter Nussbaum insists with great force that this very passage [*Gorgias* 494-95] shows how "the interlocutors" (Callicles and Socrates) share the "social prejudices" of "a Greek of Callicles' class and background" in regarding the sexual enjoyment and activity of "the passive homosexual" as ridiculous, loathsome, disgraceful, shameful, and wretched.

In paragraphs 34 and 35 of her affidavit she further suggested that any allusion to homosexual pleasures in *Gorgias* 494-95 is restricted to those of "the male prostitute," and that the court would find this substantiated in the same chapter of her book. This, too, was not the case. In that chapter (as again in chapter 7, p. 231) she unhesitatingly (and rightly) interprets the passage's allusion, and its adverse normative judgments (which in a footnote, she actually goes out of her way to tell the reader she does not share), as including the activities and pleasures of any and every "passive homosexual." But in court and in her affidavit she denied that Greek public morality or any great Greek philosopher ever made such adverse normative judgments. Such judgments, she maintained, came only with Christianity.

In fact the writings of Plato contain numerous condemnations of homosexual intercourse. Perhaps the bluntest and most withering comes in *Laws* 636c. Here Plato, speaking through the character of the Athenian stranger, rejects homosexual behavior as "unnatural" (*para physin*), describes it as an "enormity" or "crime" (*tolmema*), and explains that it derives from being enslaved to pleasure. Finnis had cited this passage, among others, to show that Plato, among other great pre-Christian thinkers, rejected homosexual acts on moral grounds. Thus, Nussbaum faced the daunting task of explaining away what appears to be Plato's clear condemnation of acts she had claimed no pre-Christian philosopher had ever objected to.

How did Nussbaum deal with *Laws* 636c? Her strategy was to attack the translation relied on in Finnis' first affidavit. "Repeatedly," she said, Finnis imported into Plato's text "things that are not in the Greek" and indeed whole "sentences" that "just are not there in the Greek." This claim, which was crucial to the attack on Amendment 2 as bereft of *any* rational basis, was false.

Nussbaum cited only one particular to support her remarkable claim that *Laws* 636c does not condemn sodomy. She alleged that the Loeb translation of Plato's *Laws* 636c by Bury is incompetent, prejudiced, erroneous, and unsustainable. According to Nussbaum, Bury's translation makes Plato convey adverse judgments on homosexual conduct that Plato did not make there, or anywhere else. Nussbaum contended both in court and in her sworn affidavit that to find even a "nuance" of wrongdoing conveyed by the Greek words *ton proton to tolmema*, which Bury had translated as "enormities," is outside the range of reasonable scholarly opinion. The conclusion: since Finnis found more than a "nuance" of wrongdoing, this part of his testimony was well outside the range of reasonable scholarly opinion.

Nussbaum's contention about *tolmema* is insupportable. The very authorities whom she proposed to the court as trustworthy in these matters, Kenneth Dover and A. N. Price, translate it respectively as "a crime" and "crime of the first rank."

In order to bolster her inaccurate claims about the state of scholarly opinion on *tolmema* in *Laws* 636c, she wrote precisely this in her affidavit: the "Liddle [sic, "Liddell"], Scott, *Lexicon of the Ancient Greek Language*, the authoritative dictionary relied on by all scholars in this area," translates *tolmema* as "an adventure, enterprise, deed of daring" and includes no pejorative definition corresponding to Bury's "enormities." Note well: Nussbaum told the court that the dictionary from which she was quoting is "the authoritative dictionary relied on by all scholars in this area." Yet if one looks at Liddell and Scott's

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A Greek-English Lexicon (which was never entitled "A Lexicon of the Ancient Greek Language"), one finds, in addition to the definitions of *tolmema* recited to the court by Nussbaum, the plainly pejorative definition "shameless act."

The reader may have noticed the blank space in my quotation of Nussbaum's reference to the lexicon's definition of *tolmema*. The affidavit almost certainly contained the words "Liddle, Scott, and Jones," and the words "and Jones" were whited out. (As a matter of fact, a version of the affidavit with the words "and Jones" included was served on the defendants at the same time the "whited out" version was lodged with the court.)

This is no mere pedantic quibble. More than fifty years ago a large team of specialists under the leadership of Sir Henry Stuart Jones dramatically reworked the nineteenth-century lexicon compiled by Liddell and Scott. That *revised* dictionary (still known by classicists as "Liddell & Scott") is in fact "the authoritative dictionary relied on by all scholars in this area," including Nussbaum *in her own published work*. So Professor Nussbaum put a dictionary before the court as "the authoritative dictionary relied on by all scholars in this area," but the quotation that she said was from that dictionary is in fact from a long out-of-date version of that dictionary, one that is not authoritative or relied upon by all scholars or indeed by any scholars. To have quoted from the truly "authoritative dictionary" would have destroyed the fundamental contention of Nussbaum's oral evidence and of her affidavit; but to have allowed the court to know the truth about the long-superseded nineteenth-century source of her lexicography would have deprived her testimony of the appearance of authoritative support it so badly needed to offset the devastating counterevidence of Dover.

Nussbaum went on to claim that "in the thousands of occasions of its occurrence in the language," "the word" does not once convey any nuance of wrongdoing. By "the word," she meant *tolmao* in its various forms (for she had just referred to "Plato's use of the word" in "many passages," and the form *tolmema* itself occurs but once in Plato). She failed to inform the court that the very dictionary that she was citing (like its authoritative successor) indicates that *tolmao*'s primary meanings include: "to have the courage, hardihood, *effrontery*, *cruelty*, or the grace, patience to do a thing in spite of any natural feeling." (Emphasis added.)

Nussbaum asserted the non-pejorative ("morally neutral") character of all the "thousands of occasions of its [*tolmao*'s] occurrence in the language," and appealed to the "many passages" where "Plato's use strongly connotes approval." What she withheld from the court is the elementary information that, in Plato's *Laws* alone, about two-thirds of the uses of *tolmao* are manifestly pejorative, and many spectacularly so. For instance, the term signifies for Plato the depraved and abandoned shamelessness exemplified in such enormities as slaughtering one's own mother, father, or brother, or robbing temples (all of which, according to Plato, deserve the gravest penalties, including death), as well as (just a few pages after *Laws* 636) the more generic shamelessness involved in saying, permitting, or doing what is shameful (*aischron*) (*Laws* 649d).

These matters were not belabored by the witnesses as some fascinating but arcane academic dispute, as Jeffrey Rosen's account of the trial in *The New Republic* implied. This is no more a haggle about a word than the question of whether Tonya Harding knew about the Kerrigan assault "before" or "after" it took place is a trivial matter of what time it happened to be. It is noteworthy that neither Nussbaum nor the other participants knew then that Judge Bayless would not in the end rule on the "rational basis" question. (It may even be that his reticence to do so owed something to the dispute I am describing.) Whether Nussbaum could show that Finnis' classical scholarship was distorted by his Catholic commitments was likely to be a critical part of the anticipated decision.

The Amendment 2 episode raises, as did the historians' brief in *Webster*, the important question of ethical standards for academic participation in public policy debates. The question has yet to receive the attention from academics that it deserves. Nussbaum seems to have backed off her early demand for a retraction from Robert George. After Finnis devastatingly exposed her claims, she began to paint the whole affair as a good faith dispute among scholars.

But the Amendment 2 trial was not a scholarly disagreement. It was a matter of what it means to be and to hold oneself out as a scholar. More particularly, when one holds oneself out to public authority as a scholarly expert, does one forswear dissembling and distortion however deeply one desires to advance a cause? The link between behavior of the sort engaged in by Mohr and Nussbaum and the phenomenon of "political correctness" in the academic world is well worth considering. One can only imagine the fate of a historian who did what Mohr did as part of an effort not to support "abortion rights" but to protect fetal rights, or the fate of a philosopher who did what Nussbaum did not to advance the cause of the homosexual movement but to oppose it. Something in the academy has gone radically wrong.

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Pluralism and the Lost Art of Christian Apology

Christopher R. Seitz

What is the ministry of Christians in the pluralistic society of the 1990s? I teach Old Testament and so will begin by considering the Bible's perspective on ministry in a pluralistic context. My larger question will be, ministry in the name of what, and to whom? We might assume that the answer to that question in our case would be: ministry in the name of Christ, to a pluralistic society.

Ministry in the name of Christ can of course be seen in the New Testament, so we might hope to take our cue from what we see there. But when we raise the question, "to whom," and answer, "to our pluralistic society," problems arise. It is not clear how close the fit is between the world addressed by Paul and the apostles and the world in which we live and move and have our being. There can be no doubt that those confronted by the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the New Testament represented a *religiously* pluralistic society. The book of Acts shows Christian ministry in a wide variety of contexts. "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" we hear one group cry; another appeals to Caesar and the Roman state as divine order personified; another sets up a statue to an unknown God; one even worships a stone that fell from heaven.

In the New Testament, in other words, religious pluralism is firmly in place, and religious issues and conflicts are no laughing matter. A shrine to an unknown god makes a fairly ironic statement, but it is still some distance from what we mean by secularity. Atheism and secularity find no place in either the Old or the New Testaments; in the ancient world, the debate was not whether God existed or could be talked about or related to public actions, but about who God is and what God requires. Who God is has immediate consequences for how men and women are to act in the "real world," not just in their shrines and sacred places.

Things are different today. Where pluralism in the New Testament is quintessentially religious, for us pluralism involves ethnicity and race and class and gender. Pluralism in modernity takes us out of the realm of competing religious claims and into another realm where we speak of distinguishing "secular" from "religious" perspectives. We talk about separating church and state; religious beliefs, we maintain, can be isolated from other sorts of beliefs. Indeed, we press for these various sorts of distinctions automatically, as though they were self-evident. By contrast, when Paul goes to Athens, the New York of its day, no one regards him as quaint or peripheral when he describes all Athenians as "very religious." Some of them, it is true, scoff at the notion of the resurrection of the dead—*not*, however, because they want to keep religious beliefs out of the realm of public discourse, but because, to their minds, it is bad religion.

My point here is not to challenge America's separation of church and state. But I do confess to being concerned that one tendency of that separation has been to make religion a private matter, or, if public, tolerable only in the realm of good deeds (e.g., care for the homeless) and not as part of serious public discourse and reflection. It's hard to imagine serious, ongoing, religious discussions on CNN or MacNeil-Lehrer. Yet serious religious discourse is precisely where Paul began at Athens and in many other places.

In this sense, modern Christians are at a disadvantage compared to Paul. When we speak about ministry in the name of Christ to a pluralistic society, we could never lead off with the declaration, "I perceive that in every way you are very religious," and then launch into a public debate designed to convince the already "very religious" about the superior claims of Christianity or the inadequacy of the religion they presently adhere to. We would have to take the opposite tack: "I know you're not a religious person, but have you given any thought to . . ." In short, to talk about the way ministry in the name of Christ is conceived within the Bible is to see at once how different that context is from our own.

If we do not recognize this difference, two problems may result. We might assume, first, that ministry in a pluralistic society really does not involve beliefs and convictions that truly matter and in fact lie at the heart of Christian faith, and prefer instead to focus on actions alone or private piety immune from the strains of public discourse. Yet specific beliefs and convictions are what Paul is most concerned about. Second, we might assume that the Bible and the world it describes has an immediate fit with ours where it really doesn't, pluralism being for us of a secular or intra-denominational character—two perspectives absent from the pages of the Bible. Let me elaborate this second point more fully. My concern in pointing out the difference between the Bible's world and our own is not to render it outmoded or irrelevant; it is rather to suggest that the distance of our world and its conceptual framework from that of the Bible is a problem for us, not for the Bible.

If we are going to talk about ministry in a pluralistic culture, we must begin with what has been called

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"the scandal of particularity." Here the Bible's perspective is helpful. The Bible does not assume that God can be known or experienced generally. God reveals himself fully only to Israel, and within Israel, to a few chosen individuals whose responsibility is then to pass on what they know to others within Israel. Only in this way does Israel learn that God's ways will eventually have to do with *other* nations and peoples, beyond her orbit—whether they know it or not, care about it or not. Now the modern will object that this is because the Bible is written from Israel's own perspective—but that is the whole point. The very truth of the revelation of God in Scripture has to do with the Scripture's attachment to a particular people, whom God has elected for a special and rather burdensome task. In this consists its claim to be Holy Scripture. No election, no particular revelation, no Holy Scripture.

One clear implication of this controversial point is that knowledge of God must be communicated socially—literally, by word of mouth, from God, to Moses, to Israel, and outward, in the fullness of time, to all nations and peoples, penetrating every pluralistic pocket. Psalm 78 summarizes this perspective: "God established in Jacob a testimony, in Israel he appointed a law, which he commanded our fathers to teach their children; that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God." Not God in general, but Israel's named LORD, in particular, who has acted in specific and even hidden ways with his own particular people.

Consider how removed and in fact offensive such a notion is to modern, channel-surfing sensibilities. Immediate access to everything, whenever we want it, is the watchword of the information superhighway. Would it not be unfair and undemocratic, we may cry as Americans, for something so important as knowledge of God not to be universally available to any individual, directly, without any sort of interference? A direct cable hook-up. And as Christians, it may strike us as offensive to be reminded that what we know of God we learn through the witness of another people's scriptures, which become our own only because that people's king has declared us to be his people by adoption. "Now remember, you Gentiles," Paul says in Ephesians, "remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, and without God in the world." Only through Christ do we Gentiles become fellow heirs, through adoption, of promises once preserved within the bosom of Israel.

Or consider the wider witness of the New Testament. Throughout the book of Acts, Paul's appeal to God in Christ is made on the basis, not just of his personal experience (which looks pretty unrepeatable), but on the witness of the scriptures, the Old Testament. Acts ends with Paul in Rome "testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets" (28:23). Paul uses Israel's own literature to witness to Christ, to Jew and Gentile. There is no separate strategy for the Gentiles, i.e., use the scriptures for Jews, appeal to general religious instincts for others that have no point of contact with those scriptures. The one decisive message of God in Christ is rooted in an ancient witness and ancient promises. In the New Testament there is no New Testament, but only the scriptures of Israel which testify to Christ and reveal him and the Father to the world beyond Israel's own borders.

The point here is that Christian ministry in a pluralistic society does not start outward, out there, and move inward. The Church's primary task is to be the body of Christ, to build itself up in the knowledge and love of God. To love the neighbor as oneself is a commandment like the first, but it is not a replacement for the first. Paul's overriding concern is not love of neighbor for its own sake, but the knowledge and love of God—a particular God revealed particularly in Christ—who has the power to give life in ways neither the neighbor nor the world can give. In order to do this Paul appeals to the Church's scriptural legacy and the basic story of Jesus: his life, his death, his resurrection, and his continued presence in word and sacrament.

What are the implications of this biblical understanding of revelation and pluralism for Christians today? Stripped to essentials, Christian ministry begins with *the capacity to make a robust, intelligent accounting of the faith we hold.* Can we state with clarity and conviction what it is that we believe, as this has been handed down to us? What does it mean to say that we worship a crucified and risen Lord? That we believe in a final judgment of the quick and the dead? That we believe the God who created the world is not identical with creation? That we look to Christ's return in glory? Before we move to commend the faith to others in this pluralistic society—however we might do that—can we first state with comprehensiveness and conviction what it is that we ourselves believe, as this has been handed down to us, from Israel to the apostles and from one generation of faith to the next?

Christian ministry in a pluralistic society begins with the capacity to speak the faith intelligently and persuasively to ourselves and to one another *within* the household of faith. We should not be ashamed or concerned to have this as our primary goal. For the pluralism the Gospel seeks to address is as omnipresent as the air we breathe, and exists within our midst as much as outside of it. The challenge is not how to address pluralism with some sure thing we presume to know that then must be adapted or modified in order to get an effective hearing; the challenge

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is how to identify the faith we claim to hold, that laid hold on us in baptism, in the face of a pluralism that is already our daily bread.

I am an advisor to a seminarian preparing for ministry at Yale. Together we are to write an evaluation of his work thus far and his preparedness for ministry. The first question to be addressed is his grasp of the Christian tradition. Why? To show that he can distinguish between Anselm and Aquinas? Certainly not for its own sake, or in order to appear on "Jeopardy" and ace the religion questions. Then why? So that we can trust him to teach the faith to children, to others, to a new generation of Christian people; so that he can hand on to others the faith that was commended once to him: by priest or pastor or mother or Bible-reading or even those old confirmation classes that taught us what a sacrament was.

This responsibility is not peculiar to the ordained. We do expect the ordained to be on call all the time and ever ready to commend the faith of the Church in word and deed, in the same way we set aside a 911 number we count on, with somebody always at the end of the line. Yet the same responsibility to commend the faith of the Church, to be able to interpret with care and intelligence the creeds we recite every Sunday—this is precisely the responsibility every one of us takes on as godparents, as parents, as baptized Christians trying to live in a pluralistic society.

So before we run to tackle some agreed-upon benevolent activity, before we defer to the wisdom of the age because it has the imprimatur of the talk-show hosts, before we assume that ministry involves others more inspired or more suited or more whatever than ourselves, it should not be forgotten that ministry begins with the simple confession of faith corporately held. The Church is the place where that faith is taught, preached, nurtured, and shared. The world is where that faith is passed on with vigor, humor, and compassion.

The recent movie *Shadowlands* received enthusiastic reviews. Why? Because it tells a moving story about an aging academic who falls in love, and who then loses this love through sickness and death? C. S. Lewis is certainly not the first man to have loved—even poignantly—and lost. What gives the story its special appeal is that it concerns a great Christian apologist, a man who sought to interpret to the world around him—to children, to the general public, to his own academic colleagues, and also, finally, to himself—matters of God and life and death and heaven and hell and sin and sickness and doubt and hope. What happens to a great Christian apologist who loves and loses? That is a story worth hearing.

If the lost art of Christian apology means anything, it means commending the faith that is in us as did Lewis in his day: with rigor, with intellectual honesty, and with a conviction born of deep personal struggle, where the faith the Church commends corporately has become the experience of the living God, who alone can speak from the depths of death and doubt and despair as forcefully as from realms of power and majesty. This is the sort of faith that can weather the onslaughts of life and address more poignantly than anything else the challenges of our pluralistic society in the 1990s. This is what lies at the heart of Christian apology. And good Christian apology is where ministry in a pluralistic society begins and ends, in every age and especially in our own.

Allow me a final comment from the perspective of a teacher in a divinity school that trains ministers in the 1990s. A discussion of specifically *lay* ministry as against *clerical* ministry may trade on a distinction between those who know the faith well or professionally and those who hold the faith poorly or casually. This is a distinction we can no longer trust, especially when it comes to assessing present-day seminarians and the sorts of formal Christian education they bring with them to seminary.

In a recent essay on theological education, my colleague Thomas Ogletree draws a distinction between catechesis and a more mature engagement with the Gospel. In describing his former theological school's commitment to multicultural education (Drew), with attention to the pluralistic society of the late twentieth century, he contrasts catechetical instruction with "advanced professional and graduate education." "To be sure," he says, "catechetical instruction has its place in the life of the Church, but that place is not advanced professional and graduate education. Catechesis furnishes milk for babes in Christ, not the solid food of the Gospel which can equip men and women for leadership in the church and its worldly mission."*

That comment sums up well how theological education has been carried out over recent decades. My question is whether the assumption on which it is based is any longer accurate. Can we today be sure that the students who come to us have received catechetical instruction of the sort Ogletree both appreciates but also contrasts with something more solid and substantial? The question is important because teaching people to think critically about the faith they hold obviously requires that they already hold some faith, in a precritical, even catechetical, framework. Today, it seems more likely that critical thinking of the sort that works in graduate institutions is what students already have a good grasp of; what they don't have is catechetical training. Most don't know the names of half of the books of the Bible,

* "Drew's Theological Ethos: In Quest of Multi-Cultural Theological Education," *The Drew Gateway* (Fall 1989), pp.41-53. Incidentally, Drew Theological School was recently in the popular press because it held a communion service to worship "Sophia." I wonder if in such a context it would be regarded as inappropriate to raise an objection from the standpoint of the First Commandment—something once taught in catechetical instruction?

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whether Calvin lived before or after Augustine, what it means to say that Christ descended to the dead or acted "in accordance with the Scriptures," what the wrath of God means or how to understand a final judgment of the quick and the dead. And of course good catechetics would mean not just knowing something about these things, but also being able to interpret their significance to a radically pluralistic world in vigorous and compelling ways.

I wonder if catechetics is what Lewis meant by "mere Christianity," and if so, I can think of no more noble or even advanced goal for a divinity school than to train students catechetically. To put it another way: schools might try to discover what the art of robust Christian apology might look like in our day. But for that we need a stronger foundation of basic Christian faith. Theological educators will disagree about what constitutes good education in a graduate school setting. What should be less controversial is the degree to which we expect our students to arrive with anything like a grasp of basic Christian tradition: creedal, biblical, historical, theological. Without this foundation in the tradition, instead of Christian apology we have the sharing of deep feelings and strongly held convictions, pluralism for its own sake, whose horizon is the possibility of entente and mutual regard between differing factions. But to the larger world this looks like intramural squabbling and a sign of decay, not serious engagement with either the tradition or the public square. Our problem is that we have so-called critical thinking built upon no substantive base, a presumed teasing out of the implications of catechetical faith with such faith never having been in place to begin with.

The challenge is how to construct a theological curriculum that respects this changed situation and yet is more than a remedial run-through of basic Christian teaching. In this respect, the situation is the same for churches and seminaries, for lay and ordained, for young and old. The erosion we have experienced has been no respecter of traditional distinctions. Solid food is no doubt the stuff of mature Christian apology. But this demands that we first be fed on milk. It was precisely to a divided and factious assembly at Corinth that Paul spoke about the necessity of foundations being in place—he used the metaphor of mother's milk—before he could address them as spiritual men and women.

There is another New Testament text relevant to our situation: "Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new." (Acts 17:21) Christian apology consists in telling something old, passed on by others to us, in faithful and compelling ways to a new generation, "that they might know them and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God." What would a curriculum, in church or in seminary, look like that had that as its goal? Until we can answer that question we will have difficulty, whether clergy or laity, being effective ministers of Christ in the pluralistic society of the 1990s.

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A Tale of Two Stanleys

Alan Jacobs

This is a story about two men named Stanley. They live in the same town in North Carolina. In fact, they are neighbors. Not only that, they work at the same place, though in different departments. If they were in some other occupation, one might expect them to share rides to work, but they are college professors (Duke), and therefore keep irregular hours. So carpooling probably doesn't work for them. Still, they must have some interesting conversations from time to time. I draw this inference because one of the Stanleys has recently come to sound more and more like the other one. Oddly, though, this influence does not seem to work both ways. I wonder why.

One Stanley is a theologian. His last name is Hauerwas. The other (more famous) Stanley is a literary and legal theorist. His last name is Fish. There was a time when Stanley Hauerwas said things that closely resembled the things said by a philosopher named Alasdair MacIntyre, who teaches at the university (Notre Dame) where Hauerwas used to teach. (Perhaps *they* shared rides to work.) Nowadays Hauerwas says things that resemble the things said by Fish.

Fish, on the other hand, sounds like himself most of the time, and when he doesn't, he sounds like a philosopher named Rorty. But he never sounds like Stanley Hauerwas. For instance, while Hauerwas now uses words like "interpretive communities" and "strategies of interpretation," Fish has not yet been heard to talk about God or the Church. Both ends of this comparison suggest, to me anyway, an unfortunate state of affairs.

One might readily conclude—and it appears that Hauerwas has so concluded—that Fish's "interpretive communities" are pretty much the same as MacIntyre's "traditions." And indeed the two thinkers have some key beliefs in common. Both argue that the Enlightenment's picture of the ratio-

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nal thinker—a person free from adherence to traditions and prejudices that cloud the mental vision and impair one's objectivity, and who is thereby able to consider questions disinterestedly and, eventually, to reach conclusions that could not be denied by any other rational thinkers—describes an impossible beast. Both agree that all thinking, all decision-making, goes on within the context of what one calls an interpretive community and the other calls a tradition; moreover, our standards of rationality, our judgments about art or politics or science, are bequeathed to us by the traditions or communities into which we are educated, rather than being built into the fundamental structures of our minds. Of course, it is not just MacIntyre and Fish who share these convictions; another famous proponent of this general position is the German philosopher of hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer. And then there is Pope John Paul II.

The invocation of that last name may serve to warn many readers that people who share the convictions just described do not necessarily share much else, and that as common ground goes, such an anti-Enlightenment view of rationality doesn't constitute a particularly expansive patch. This is a point that appears to be lost on Hauerwas. His most recent book, *Unleashing the Scripture: Freeing the Bible from Captivity to America* (Abingdon Press), contains a chapter entitled "Stanley Fish, the Pope, and the Bible," which attempts to convince his readers that that patch of common ground is a great deal bigger than it really is. "Stanley Fish and Pope John Paul II are on the same side when it comes to the politics of interpretation," he writes. "Both men assume that the text, and in this case the text of Scripture, can be interpreted only in the context of an 'interpretative community.' For John Paul II (and all the apostles before him in the tradition), the community necessary for the reading of Scripture is the Roman Catholic Church, which includes the Office of the Magisterium." These sentences provide an excellent example of a claim that is true as far as it goes, but because it doesn't go far enough, conveys error. An unbridgeable chasm yawns between Fish and the Pope, and Hauerwas ignores it.

The key is this: it is correct to say that for the Pope, and for any Christian who holds a high doctrine of the Church, the whole truth about who Jesus is and about God's purposes for his people and his world cannot be ascertained by the unaided operations of reason. The ancient division of the Seven Cardinal Virtues into the four Rational virtues, which can in principle be discovered and understood by anyone, and the three Theological virtues, which can only be known through divine revelation, is theology's most famous acknowledgment of the limitations of human reason, but the same insight has been formulated in many other ways. However, while Christians with a low doctrine of the church would argue that those Theological virtues are typically revealed directly by God to the individual believer, the Pope (along with millions of other Christians, many if not most of whom are not Roman Catholics) would contend that it is only through the mediation of the Church, the Body of Christ—the interpretive community that it represents, the tradition that it embodies—that such revelation can be given and received.

Now, what must be noted here is the simple fact that, faced with the competing claims of many rival traditions and communities (both within and outside the sphere of Christianity), the Pope and Alasdair MacIntyre both claim that it is not only possible but rationally defensible to claim that one of these traditions can be essentially right, the others (if not in every respect) wrong. Stanley Fish, conversely, thinks that two conditions in our interpretive world force us to conclude that no one can say whether one tradition is more truthful than another: first, there are many different and conflicting interpretive communities; and second, there is no solid ground outside of any community from which to judge these rival claims. "Truth" can be nothing more than "truth-for-me," or rather, "truth-for-my-community." In other words, Fish believes what MacIntyre says that people like him believe. Here is MacIntyre in one of the most concise and brilliant analytical moments in contemporary philosophy (from *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*):

> Post-Enlightenment relativism and perspectivism are thus the negative counterpart of the Enlightenment, its inverted mirror image. Where the Enlightenment invoked the arguments of Kant or Bentham, such post-Enlightenment theorists invoke Nietzsche's attacks upon Kant and Bentham. It is therefore not surprising that what was invisible to the thinkers of the Enlightenment should be equally invisible to those postmodernist relativists and perspectivists who take themselves to be the enemies of the Enlightenment, while in fact being to a large and unacknowledged degree its heirs. What neither was or is able to recognize is the kind of rationality possessed by traditions.

But the Pope (again, along with many other Christians) does recognize this rationality, and in particular the rationality of his own Christian tradition. He believes in Truth with a capital T, but also believes that this Truth in its fullness is accessible, not to any randomly chosen "rational person," but only through the tradition or the community called the Church. This position, articulated so powerfully by MacIntyre, is one that Fish, as far as one can tell, has never considered; to him it is obvious that if the Enlightenment's attempts at establishing an indubitable foun-

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dation for rational knowledge have failed, then rational knowledge is perforce impossible.

In so cavalierly and dangerously linking Stanley Fish and the Pope, Stanley Hauerwas has, it seems to me, fallen into a trap that is currently snaring many Christians—and it is indeed an appealing trap. For two centuries or more now, many thoughtful Christians have granted the validity of the Enlightenment's definition of rationality, and have then set about trying to defend Christianity according to the demands of that particular philosophical scheme. Such attempts have not been wholly unsuccessful; even Josh MacDowell's often-belittled *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* books have persuaded many people that, for instance, the notion of the Empty Tomb is not as absurd as it may, prima facie, appear. But books like MacDowell's tend not so much to provide a solid foundation on which to ground faith as to pry partly open some firmly closed minds. And the general public quite clearly believes, and has believed for a long time, that what they think of as "rational" or "objective" evidence works against rather than for Christianity.

So one can see why many Christians have been rather pleased to discover that the Enlightenment's standards of rationality and evidence—which as weapons, in their hands anyway, have proved more dangerous to the users than to the targets—are unworkable. This is why you hear so many Christians today claim, with the relief of a just-pardoned Sisyphus, that postmodernism (what Fish calls "anti-foundationalism," MacIntyre "post-Enlightenment relativism and perspectivism") at long last "levels the playing field."

But what good is a level playing field if there is now no agreement on the rules of the game, or even on what game is to be played? In the old days, it now appears, the standards of rationality and evidence were defined in such a way that Christianity could not compel widespread assent from those who adhered to such standards; but, on the other hand, those who made the strongest cases for Christianity could count not only on a hearing but on certain kinds of counter-arguments, some of which might help the apologists strengthen and clarify their own arguments. Moreover, the would-be apologist knew precisely what the rules for disputative engagement were and how to follow them.

Our postmodern "level playing field," on the other hand, can provide no one a compelling reason to listen or to respond to the Christian case. Richard Rorty was once heard to say, in answer to a question about just this issue, that the theists are certainly free to talk, but "we don't have to listen." Fish writes (in the course of an argument more subtle than the following quote will make it appear) that "all preferences are principled [and] all principles are preferences." The judgments of the Court of Preference admit of no appeal; there is no higher judiciary to which one can make recourse. Either your case for Christianity happens to persuade your audience or it doesn't. This is progress?

Yet there is quite clearly no way of returning to the heyday of Enlightenment rationalism and foundationalism, even should one want to do so. Therefore what is required now is what Stanley Hauerwas, at least in his most recent book, so conspicuously fails to give: a recognition of the different forms of anti-foundationalism, an acknowledgment that the enemy of my foundationalist enemy is not necessarily my friend. Or, to put it more bluntly and perhaps more reductively, an awareness of the difference between a postmodern thinker like Fish and a premodern like the Pope.

Yes; that is too reductive a formulation. Because premodernity is for all of us impossible; we cannot pretend that the Enlightenment never happened, or even that it was a mere blip on the historical screen. The kind of rationality proclaimed and sought after by the thinkers of the Enlightenment has shaped, and continues to shape, our world in ways too extensive and profound for full description. Thinkers like MacIntyre, who works in the Thomist tradition, and John Milbank, the English theologian whose magisterial *Theology and Social Theory* attempts to renew Augustinian social and political thought, are fully aware of this fact: the one cannot be a Thomist as Aquinas was, nor the other an Augustinian as Augustine was. But, as John Henry Newman, Jaroslav Pelikan, and MacIntyre, among others, have cogently argued, traditions grow and develop. It is possible that, by standing on the shoulders of giants like Thomas and Augustine, we may be able to see a little farther than they could.

This, needless to say, is not Stanley Fish's way of thinking, and it is a pity that Hauerwas in his new book fails to acknowledge the great chasm between, on the one hand, Fish and Rorty and their coreligionists, and, on the other, MacIntyre, the Pope, Milbank, and the Anglican theologian Lesslie Newbigin. What metaphor may best describe this difference?

Let us imagine a trail, a trail blazed by the thinkers of the Enlightenment, which most who have walked on it agree has ended in a swamp, or at the foot of an unscalable cliff. Say some, "Now that this trail has culminated in a dead end, it is clear that we can never reach our destination. In fact, the very idea of a 'destination' was a misbegotten fantasy. We should remain content where we are." But others decide to retrace their steps and to rejoin what they now have come to understand as the main road, the highway, from which this abortive trail had diverged. As they take up that highway, though, they evaluate it in a new way; they remember what they saw, some of it quite interesting, and what they learned, some of it quite

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valuable, along the dead-end trail. But make no mistake: they are now quite sure that there is all the difference in the world between a highway and a cul-de-sac, that there is a destination to be reached, and that it would be a great shame and a pity not to reach it, or worse, not even to try.

Where shall we place our two Stanleys in this little allegory?

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On The Other Hand

Political Decency

Peter L. Berger

The most prominent victim of the wave of neo-Nazi letter bombs that rocked Austria some months ago was Helmut Zilk, the mayor of Vienna. Vienna is a state in the Austrian federal system, so that its mayor is also the head of the most important regional government. The bomb shattered his left hand, and he lost several fingers. Zilk had become a target because of his repeated statements opposing the anti-foreigner campaign and because of his actions on behalf of refugees from the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and other zones of misery. There were other reasons why Zilk attracted the hatred of the neo-Nazis. Throughout his political career he had confronted the horrors of the Third Reich, which many Austrians like to forget, and as mayor he had actively fostered the reestablishment of Jewish institutions and community life in Vienna.

Following the attack there was an outpouring of sympathy for the wounded mayor from people across the political spectrum, coupled with declarations that such acts of hate-driven violence must never be allowed to happen again. A statement of this kind was also issued by Joerg Haider, the leader of the right-wing Freedom Party, who had spearheaded the anti-foreigner campaign and whose rhetoric had undertones with disturbingly racist associations. In a surprising move that was widely criticized as politically inept, Zilk invited Haider to visit him in the hospital. They had a long conversation about the inadmissibility of violence and about the importance of democratic decencies. Haider asserted that the conversation left him deeply moved. Be that as it may, the incident yet again revealed Zilk as a politician with a penchant for civility and conciliation.

In the 1950s a German film titled "The Murderers are Among Us" was shown. It gave voice to the awareness that the perpetrators of the most unspeakable atrocities were now living lives of bourgeois respectability, unrecognized and unrecognizable in the new postwar normality. And indeed, anyone with a degree of sensitivity about these matters would, upon meeting a stranger, ask himself what this individual had been doing a few years earlier. One would be alert to telltale bits of information, to slips of the tongue and certain nuances of language. Mercifully, this is no longer the case. Today someone would have to be at least in his seventies to have played a significant role, or, as in most cases, even a minor one, in the Nazi nightmare. Most people one encounters, like Zilk and the great majority of Austrian political figures, are too young. In that sense, Kurt Waldheim was an exception. The question today is only rarely whether the person one is talking with may have been a mass murderer in an earlier incarnation. The question is rather how this person confronts, or fails to confront, the murders of the past, and following that, how he stands up to the new murderers and would-be murderers who are among us again.

Zilk comes out of a highly distinctive political culture, that of Viennese Social Democracy. Early in this century and since then during any period when there were free elections, the Social Democratic party controlled the municipal government and thus, since 1945, the Vienna state government. The Rathaus, the ornate city hall on the famous Ringstrasse that encircles the center of the capital, has long been the symbol of "Red Vienna." During their many years in power the Social Democrats managed to create much more than a highly effective political organization. They also created a culture, in some sense a counterculture, with its own social and educational institutions, and with an unmistakable flavor. To be sure, this distinctive culture has weakened in recent years, as, due to increasing prosperity, the old class distinctions have faded and as the party has been successfully appealing to voters outside its traditional working-class constituency.

There is no reason to romanticize this culture in order to acknowledge its virtues. Its original ideology, so-called Austro-Marxism, was a curious mix of brilliant insights and an untenable worldview. An important part of this worldview was a visceral secularism, which had unfortunate political consequences in a country with abidingly vital Catholic traditions.

But the culture of "Red Vienna" has had a number of characteristics that deserve considerable respect. From its inception it has been unambiguously in favor of democracy, and therefore as staunchly anti-Communist as anti-Fascist. It has stood for ethnic tolerance. It has been unusually open to critical debate, and for much of its history its leading intellectuals were Jews. Thus Zilk, aside from his own personal merit, represents a political culture judged to be es-

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sentially decent even by people who disagree sharply with many of the positions and policies of the Social Democratic party.

In my childhood in Vienna in the 1930s I had a school book with the title *Our City*. As far as I can recall, it had no particular civic purpose, but was intended to teach reading. Naturally, on its cover, was a picture of the Rathaus. The book contained stories on the various municipal services involved in making the city a safe and enjoyable place for children—the police, the fire and sanitation departments, the water works, the streetcars. The streetcars, then as today, were red in color, with the coat-of-arms of the city, a white cross on a red field, emblazoned on their sides. I frequently travelled on the "J" line (it too is still called that) from the center, where my father's store was located, to our home. The streetcar turned left from the Ringstrassse within sight of the Rathaus. I also recall walking near the Rathaus shortly after the Anschluss. A gigantic swastika flag was hanging over its front entrance. The city, then, was no longer a safe place for some of its children.

I had never been inside the Rathaus until a few months ago, when I was invited to a dinner given by Zilk for the participants in an international conference on European migration. It so happened that I ended up sitting at his table, along with the French ambassador and his wife and several Austrian political types. The conversation was mostly carried on between Zilk and the politicos, and was mostly taken up with various outlandish events in the city's politics. The French spoke excellent German, but they were frequently lost when Zilk and his fellow-politicos lapsed into broad Viennese dialect. Earlier, when I was introduced to Zilk as someone who had been born in Vienna, Zilk wanted to know where I had first lived as a child. I told him—the Eighth District, Josefsstadt. He wanted to know the street—I told him that too. He nodded. I felt certain that he knew how that neighborhood had voted in every election over the last three decades. He then wanted to know the exact address of the house. That, however, I had forgotten. But I told him that there had been a business on the ground floor that manufactured and sold prosthetic devices; it had been there a few years ago, when I had been in the area; I didn't know if it was still there. "It's still there," said Zilk.

There had been a showcase exhibiting various products of the firm—wooden arms and legs, iron hooks and grasping devices, leather supports. I had as a child found these objects frightening and I always avoided looking at that showcase. My memory may well deceive me after all these years, but it seems to me that it was in that place where I first received an intimation that terrible things can happen and that the world was a less safe place than *Our City* had led me to believe.

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For Show

(Psalm 34)

Today I have to dance, hoo-ha, roast lamb,
How summer's put to bed, no supper
After beast boys boasting pass the dipper.
No, I'll never say it. Never.
Kings could call me clever,
Show their wives wares favors

Toasty, pour the empty bottle
Over here please. I sing psalms just

To the thread that holds it all together,
Harp in hand, my knees and head
Elected by the dust to rule the doodle-do.

Lord, if I am crazy let me be so in name
Only. Haters, eaten from the inside out,
Ride slowly with their lawyers toward the exit
Door, and think it not there, but there is no out.

Laurance Wieder

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The Illusions of Military Power

A. J. Bacevich

I

"These Colors Don't Run." By the time the controversy over Vietnam had reached its height, that defiant slogan had become in its way emblematic of an era. Accompanied by a prosaic image of Old Glory, it appeared across the vast expanse of middle America: stuck to the bumper of family station wagons, plastered on the side of semi-trailer cabs, and displayed in roadside cafes. In the midst of a most unpopular war, such sentiments testified to the persistence of grassroots support for America's armed forces. As was the case with any ugly conflict, that support had originated in nothing more complicated than the sympathy felt for young men dispatched into combat, blended no doubt with a tincture of red-blooded patriotism. Long before the war reached its melancholy end, however, much more was involved.

In more progressive quarters, sympathy for those being sent to Vietnam was notable by its absence. The cadres animating what became the antiwar movement—a movement energized by a resurgence of political radicalism—could find no shred of merit in the American cause in Southeast Asia. From the very outset, they reviled the war without stint and without qualification. Those Americans who directed the war they abominated as dissemblers, if not criminals. Those who fought it they viewed as dupes. Only fools would participate willingly in such an enterprise. Those who understood the score took to the streets or headed north to Canada.

Paradoxically, opponents of the war also saw it as a godsend. By inflating Vietnam into a symbol of rot and corruption in the very soul of America, the antiwar movement could transform the real issue into one of politics in the broadest definition of the term. This was the movement's true aim. From the outset, many antiwar activists were less interested in vying for the control of distant rice paddies and jungles than in seizing universities, editorial offices, and the corridors of political power at home. Who ruled Saigon was not the issue, who ruled Washington was. Vietnam was thus nothing less than the opening salvo in a struggle to determine the values that would predominate in American culture.

Writing from Oxford near the end of the 1960s, a war-resister like Bill Clinton could position himself with exquisite care among those "still loving their country but loathing the military." Perhaps Clinton's attempt to have it both ways—to align himself with the forces of conscience and dissent while remaining a true-blue patriot—was guileless, the cri d'coeur of an idealist grappling with a complex moral predicament. Or perhaps this ambitious youth, intent on maintaining his "political viability within the system," tailored his views accordingly. Either way, Clinton was atypical.

Few of those who cut their eyeteeth on the antiwar movement troubled themselves with such distinctions. Rather than loathing the military even as they cherished their country, most antiwar activists loathed the military *because* it represented the essence of all that they despised. This scorn for the military mirrored the Movement's contempt for the qualities that it ascribed to the nation as a whole: shallowness and hypocrisy, widespread inequity and gross injustice, suffocating conventions of "acceptable" behavior that masked a systemic reliance on repression and violence. Unlike Bill Clinton, those who embraced the counterculture did not covet positions as influential insiders; in raising a vast clamor of protest against the system, they sought to dismantle it.

As that clamor increased, the ordinary citizens who instinctively supported "American boys" sent to

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fight endorsed at least one tenet of the antiwar thesis. They began to grasp—if at first only fleetingly—that more was at stake in the war's conduct and outcome than they had comprehended. Holding Vietnam itself in no particular regard, having little appreciation for the geopolitical implications of victory or defeat, they came to accept the notion that the war did somehow constitute a summary judgment of America itself. Vietnam was becoming the prism through which all previous American history was now interpreted. Yet their view as to what that history signified was altogether different from that of the antiwar left. Rejecting the shrill assertion that the war was exposing the American experiment as fraudulent, they insisted upon seeing themselves as well-intentioned and the nation as fundamentally virtuous.

This stubborn belief in America reflected a deeply conservative outlook, albeit a brand of conservatism that defied strict categorization. It derived less from dogma than from tradition and temperament, an outlook that rested on a series of widely accepted prescriptions as to what was right, what was necessary, and what was impermissible in both private life and the public square. It was emphatically nationalistic.

Groping for some way to testify to that outlook, Americans energized by their antipathy toward the left's smug self-righteousness found a partial answer in the American military itself. Reaffirming their commitment to the war effort—and to the military as a manifestation of *their* America—offered a visible means of resisting the agenda of the left. What had begun as a patriotic reflex thus became an impassioned expression of politics.

As long as the antics of protest monopolized media attention, this backlash attracted little notice. Yet perceptive analysts saw it as a potentially formidable political force. In the arena of national politics, conservative ideologues were quick to exploit that potential. Thus, from the mid-1960s onward, conservative intellectuals, conservative polemicists, and conservative political leaders—themselves invariably in the minority—thrust themselves into the role of the military's advocate and protector. Once mainstream Democrats caved in to the extreme left and disowned the debacle to which they had given birth in Vietnam, the identification between conservatives and the military became pronounced. It was almost a point of honor: as the left's criticism of the armed forces escalated—for My Lai and Kent State, for racial unrest and drug abuse in the ranks, for cost overruns on lavishly appointed weapons, above all, for failing to win—the right stood firm as the military's chief advocate. More than any other factor, this steadfast defense of the military accelerated the metamorphosis of conservatism that paralleled the rise of the radical left. For generations, conservatism had languished as a refuge for plutocrats. Now it transformed itself into a movement in tune with the values and sympathies of middle America.

II

In the years that followed, observers of the American scene came to accept the roles as permanently fixed: the left launched slings and arrows at the military and the right did its best to deflect them. The division seemed foreordained. It was soon all but forgotten that things had not always been that way.

To be sure, postwar American defense policy had never been entirely harmonious. Yet prior to Vietnam a tradition of bipartisanship had sustained a rough consensus regarding such matters as how to arm America and how to employ its military strength. Granted, from the earliest days of the Cold War, liberals professed a certain skepticism about military affairs. That thermonuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles had made war "obsolete" was self-evident. That force had lost whatever modest political utility it had once possessed was obvious. Western military establishments were at best a necessary evil, tolerated by progressives for purposes of deterrence, but even then suspected of harboring Strangelovian fanatics and heedless spendthrifts. If the imperatives of national security deflected attention from problems at home, it did so against a backdrop of complaint from the second-generation New Dealers who dominated the postwar left. Yet for at least two decades after World War II, the paladins of liberalism who blamed untended domestic needs on the Pentagon's insatiable appetite for aircraft carriers and long-range bombers nonetheless accepted the necessity of stocking America's arsenals with whatever hardware fighting the Cold War might require. Adlai Stevenson and LBJ and Hubert Humphrey had no trouble squaring their commitment to liberal principles with their support for American military might.

In changing all that, Vietnam changed American politics in ways that seemed irreversible. Not even the fall of Saigon could bank the fires that the long war had fueled. The war ended, but attitudes toward defense remained polarized. Thus in the aftermath of Vietnam, defense policy—the forms that military power should take, the purposes for which it should be used—continued to describe one of the principal fault lines dividing right and left. Military policy provided an arena in which the dissonance of the 1960s continued to reverberate.

American military policies and the American military establishment itself had become surrogates for a conflict rooted in irreconcilable differences over the nation's proper role in the world and, by extension, over the content of American political culture. Henceforth, any issue related to the use of American power beyond the boundaries of the United States

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triggered fierce wrangling. Having jettisoned the old principle of politics stopping at the water's edge, Americans could devise no replacement.

Of course, from its very inception that principle had rested on a fiction, one that had portrayed the ends of American military policy in terms that none could find objectionable: the defense of freedom and of America itself. The reality had long been quite different, far more complex, and not quite so benign. From the outset of the Cold War, *military* power had been crucial to creating and then sustaining throughout the West the *political* deference that had elevated the United States to the status of unchallenged leader of the Free World. American military power underwrote the expectation that in allied councils America's wishes would prevail, whether the issue at hand involved resisting Soviet expansionism, defining "universal" rights, or prescribing the rules of international commerce. Talk about democratic ideals, the vitality of the American economy, and the allure of American pop culture was well and good. But absent the nuclear arsenal of the United States, its system of far-flung bases, its garrisons maintained at flashpoints around the globe, the West would not have been so quick to conform to American expectations of how the world should work.

Thus, "The Pentagon" and all that it implied did define an essential, even preeminent, facet of the nation's identity. In this sense, large defense budgets and an assertive military posture testified to the overarching metaphor of the entire postwar era—that of a "strong America" resisting the forces of darkness. For left liberals from the 1960s onward, every component of that metaphor was anathema, starting with the fact that it was the creation of an all-white fraternity of well-to-do power-brokers who were presumed to call the shots in American government. Specifically, however, the left despised the military establishment that was both symbol of this "strong America" as well as its essential prop.

American humiliation in Vietnam only deepened the left's antagonism for a national identity defined in terms of military strength. Left liberals derided the very notion of a "Free World" engaged in a great Manichean struggle. They denounced any exercise of American power that had as its declared purpose resistance to communism. As penance for American sins in Vietnam, the left demanded that the United States henceforth remain militarily passive. To ordinary citizens, however, the left's continuing anti-militarism aimed at more than simply abandoning the anti-Communist strategy to which the nation had subscribed since the late 1940s. It was integral to the war being fought to overturn the dominant culture, inseparable from the left's scorn for the values esteemed by the right—a staid, middlebrow sensibility, a market economy, a democratic political system that granted limited powers to the state, and not least, a moral order derived from Judeo-Christian traditions.

Long after the war had ended, therefore, debates over defense continued to be debates over politics writ large. The issue immediately at hand might involve developing a new weapons system, deploying a few dozen "trainers" to assist an ally, fixing the aggregate level of defense spending, or even the opportunities for military service accorded to oppressed minorities. On the surface, the controversy of the moment might appear to be a narrow technical matter; yet both left and right understood that the underlying stakes were fundamental.

That a whole line of post-1960s liberal standard-bearers should fail to grasp this point and prove only too willing to preside over the erosion of American military power marked them in the eyes of many voters—including large numbers who had formerly considered themselves loyal Democrats—as not quite trustworthy. This became the story of post-Vietnam presidential politics: in places like Queens and Dubuque and Salt Lake City, military strength had come to be freighted with political and cultural sensitivities; the wooly-headed inability of George McGovern and Jimmy Carter and Michael Dukakis to respond to those sensibilities contributed to their undoing. Indeed, impatience with Carter's acquiescence in the decline of American power gave a critical boost to the conservative ascendancy of the late 1970s that culminated in Ronald Reagan's election to the presidency. Nor did Reagan doubt that reversing that decline was central to his mandate.

Thus, with the left having gutted the Pentagon's budget in retribution for defeat in Southeast Asia, the Reagan Administration sponsored the build-up that restored the hollow force to effectiveness. Reagan's defense initiatives made the 1980s the high water mark of conservative/military collaboration. So, for example, when liberals shied nervously away from confrontational initiatives such as modernizing NATO's tactical nuclear weapons, conservatives strongly supported such moves. When liberals warned that American opposition to Marxist insurgencies in Central America would lead to new Vietnams, conservatives thought it worth the risk—and anted up to support the Contras and the besieged government of El Salvador. When liberals derided Star Wars, conservatives invested huge sums in what was by all odds a chancy scheme. By the time Reagan left office, political divisions over defense policies had come to take the form of a parallelism that seemed a fixture of American politics: Right : Hawk :: Left : Dove.

III

Then, with stunning suddenness, two events—the fall of the Berlin Wall and Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait—scrambled this alignment. In win-

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ning the Cold War, the United States won an epic victory and became the world's only superpower. With Americans barely having begun to consider the implications of this triumph, the Gulf War revealed just how lofty was the pinnacle on which the United States now found itself perched. Together, these developments transformed the way Americans thought about defense.

Although a far lesser event than the end of the Cold War and although many of its proclaimed lessons would quickly prove misleading, Desert Storm in particular upended previous American attitudes toward war and the use of force, an upheaval felt on the left no less than on the right. Indeed, the apparently flawless execution of Desert Storm—eminently suited to the nation's pronounced sense of righteousness, voracious appetite for entertainment, and limited attention span—made it all the more disorienting.

Truly, the campaign to liberate Kuwait provided something for everyone. Thanks to monumental miscalculations by Saddam Hussein, President George Bush donned the mantle of world statesman and with approval ratings soaring above 90 percent made himself a sure bet (so said the experts) for reelection. Doing what they do best, the media rendered complex reality as caricature, packaging war as melodrama, complete with innocents and oppressors and a posse dispatched to the rescue, climaxing in a spectacular shoot-out with villains vanquished, heroes triumphant, and justice done—the entire proceedings beamed around the world in living color. The uniformed services meanwhile got the big win for which they had yearned, silencing (finally) their critics and affirming the legitimacy of their profession by demonstrating that real war—army versus army, with generals in charge and victory as the outcome—was not obsolete. Thrilling to a spectacle that outdid even the Super Bowl and the NCAA Final Four (and conveniently filling the void between those two events), Joe Sixpack derived huge satisfaction from this reassurance that the United States was once again indisputably Number One. Little wonder that Americans in every quarter saw in the Gulf War portents of even better things to come.

Underlying these expectations was the belief that warfare itself was in the midst of a revolutionary transformation. If Desert Storm proved anything, it proved that technology was changing war fundamentally and irrevocably. Satellites, sensors, computers, lasers, high-speed data links, night vision devices, "low observables"—the panoply of high-tech systems that figured so prominently in our images of the Gulf War—were converting what was formerly a blunt instrument into a device that advanced nations could employ with hitherto unimaginable precision and with confidence of achieving prompt results at tolerable human and material cost. No more slogging through long, bloody, indecisive campaigns. No more wholesale slaughter of noncombatants as an incidental accompaniment of war. No more quagmires.

Absolutely integral to the emerging military orthodoxy was a subtext of two related propositions. The first was that the revolution in warfare reversed the trend that had reduced to the point of invisibility the utility of force. In an astonishing turnabout, shapers of opinion began to impute to force wondrous new applications. As a result, in the aftermath of Desert Storm expectations regarding the uses to which a high-tech military might be put mushroomed. That the military might henceforth assume responsibility for tasks like shielding the persecuted, providing sustenance to the starving, and disciplining the recalcitrant struck many as eminently sensible. When it came to correcting the world's ills, where diplomacy or economic leverage or the pressure of public opinion failed, a couple of smart bombs just might do the trick. Should a dollop of force not suffice, then a Desert Storm-style air campaign promised to solve the problem in short order.

The second proposition—one that found as much favor outside the United States as at home—was no less important. It postulated that among the world's military establishments the well-trained and superbly equipped American forces that had vanquished Saddam were uniquely suited to capitalize on this revolution. As a result, the revolution in military affairs empowered the United States with a new capacity to influence the course of world affairs—if Americans would simply muster the vision and the will to do so. Thus the optimism of President Bush at a press conference immediately following the Gulf War—an optimism that pervaded enlightened circles: "Because of what's happened we won't have to use U.S. forces around the world. I think when we say something that is objectively correct—like don't take over a neighbor or you're going to bear some responsibility—people are going to listen."

Enthusiasm for this new orthodoxy transcended the usual political categories. Thus, once the liberation of Kuwait had been accomplished, the partisanship that had characterized discussion of American defense policy since Vietnam eased perceptibly. Liberal antagonism toward the military softened. As the nation indulged in an orgy of self-congratulation to celebrate success in the Gulf, differences between left and right on military matters began to blur. Liberals and conservatives together embraced the thesis that "the troops" and their high-tech paraphernalia personified all that was best about America. With the Emerald City of a harmonious world order shimmering in the near distance, voices from across the political spectrum professed to believe that American military might would pave the Yellow Brick Road leading to the city's gates.

Nothing more clearly exemplified this depoliticization of military affairs than the presidential cam-

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paign of 1992. When it came to defense, the opposing candidates—one a career Cold Warrior, the other a self-styled New Democrat who had evaded service in Vietnam—had remarkably little to say. On the few occasions when the subject did come up, their views were nearly indistinguishable. Should the American battle fleet include fourteen carrier battle groups or twelve? Efforts to portray these differences of opinion as significant foundered on the fact that, in either case, the United States Navy would retain more carriers than all the remaining navies of the world combined. So similar were the positions of the two candidates that, in a campaign widely perceived to revolve around the need for "change," the ends for which the world-champion American military establishment might henceforth be employed was largely a nonissue.

In his infrequent references to defense, Bill Clinton pointedly distanced himself from the soft views associated with previous presidential aspirants in the McGovern and Dukakis mold, proclaiming his commitment to a policy that "keeps America strong." Yet this had less to do with substance than with assuming correct attitudes. Clinton took pains to show that he now held in highest regard those who had served or were serving in uniform. Recalling his attendance at a Little Rock parade honoring Arkansas' returning Gulf War heroes, for example, candidate Clinton spoke of the pride he had come to feel for *all* veterans. "I'll never forget how moved I was as I watched them march down the street to our cheers, and saw the Vietnam veterans finally being given the honor they deserved all along."

No longer loathing the armed forces, neither did Clinton view the use of American military power as repugnant. Indeed, he expected the military to be a real asset in shaping the emerging post-Cold War order. Clinton envisioned the American military playing a key role in a proposed International Rapid Deployment Force that would find wide employment "standing guard at the borders of countries threatened by aggression, preventing attacks on civilians, providing humanitarian relief, and combatting terrorism and drug trafficking." Not that Clinton would hesitate to act unilaterally when the occasion required. Pressed by reporters to explain how he would resolve the Bosnian imbroglio, for example, candidate Clinton vowed that he "would begin with air power, against the Serbs, to try to restore the basic conditions of humanity."

A newly anointed champion of the left and former war-resister promoting aerial bombardment to "restore the basic conditions of humanity" to an obscure corner of Europe embroiled in a vicious conflict: thus had American thinking about the utility of force, inspired by the dubious promise of Desert Storm, finally overcome the Vietnam syndrome. Thus, too, had it become decoupled from considerations of strategy and calculations of national interest.

IV

Amidst this clamor for militarism-in-pursuit-of-worthy-causes, some few dissenting voices attempted to make themselves heard. Notable among them were the mandarins of the foreign policy establishment. Although indifferent to the depoliticization of defense—apart from maintaining the nominal party affiliation that is a prerequisite for appointment to positions of power, mandarins do not stoop to mere politics—members of the foreign policy elite viewed the decoupling of military policy from strategy as a matter of grave concern and a professional embarrassment. Although mandarins cultivate the pretense of being above partisan matters, statecraft and grand strategy rouse their passions. Such matters, after all, justify their existence as a privileged class.

Over the course of forty years, regardless of who might occupy the Oval Office or control the Congress, the purpose of the mandarins had remained constant: to keep the ship of state steady on the internationalist course charted by that legendary cohort of "Wise Men" who had devised America's postwar strategy, casting a weather eye for shifts in the popular mood that might jeopardize that strategy. By 1991, however, success beyond the wildest imaginings of the architects of containment had left American strategy badly in need of refurbishing. With public opinion even giddier than usual after the Gulf War, the mandarins believed it imperative that someone puncture unrealistic expectations about the era now dawning and keep the nation on an even strategic keel. Someone, in other words, needed to talk sense to the American people. Not for a moment did the mandarins doubt that responsibility for doing so was quite properly theirs.

In short order, a flurry of high-sounding speculations and pronouncements began spewing forth from prestigious addresses between Cambridge and Washington, each proffering some label to hang on this new era and each prescribing new approaches that would tie together the several strands of American policy, military and otherwise. Competition among would-be George Kennans aspiring to become the seer of the new age was indeed fierce. Yet none of these efforts to impose a new grand strategy from on high took hold.

It was not for want of imagination or originality that this effort failed. Rather, the nation's changing political temper had combined with the new military orthodoxy to deprive the mandarins of the authority to which they had become accustomed. Although Henry and Zbig et al. still held forth on the op-ed pages of the *New York Times* or in prestigious journals, few paid attention. For Americans eager to turn their attention to an accumulation of domestic complaints—a stagnant economy, crime in the

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streets, woefully inadequate schools, the health care "crisis"—elite reflections about geopolitics, however cogent, no longer carried much weight. Unless it translated into jobs for Queens or Dubuque, geopolitics itself didn't especially matter. Rather than reupping for the obligations and hefty price tag of some new Global Strategy, Americans looked to leaders who would direct their attention to matters at home. As the stunning rejection of George Bush in November 1992 suggested, popular gratitude for even splendid feats of statesmanship was ephemeral.

Besides, had not Desert Storm itself demonstrated that the conventions of strategy were themselves becoming obsolete? Never especially comfortable with the classic dictum that defined war as an extension of politics, popularizers of the new orthodoxy were now able to go Clausewitz one better: war bid fair to supersede politics. Throughout the Cold War, doctrines pertaining to force and its use had constituted only one element of a larger overall national strategy. Formulating strategy was understood to involve setting priorities and making choices. It had required calculated judgments about what the nation must do, what it need not do, and what it should not even attempt, a process that assumed a capacity to discriminate between goals defined as essential and those deemed merely desirable. Allocating limited resources forced trade-offs between competing objectives. Vietnam had, if anything, sharpened this process. By politicizing everything related to defense, the division between left and right meant that any use of American military power was subjected to intense scrutiny, that very prospect suppressing any inclinations to stray from what strategy itself could justify.

Now those constraints eased. Trade-offs and compromises no longer seemed necessary. In elevating the United States to a position of unchallenged primacy, the twin victories of the Cold War (which inspired serious people to declare that history had ended with our side on top) and of Desert Storm (which persuaded others that the Pentagon had unlocked the innermost secrets of warfare) suggested that this nation at least would henceforth operate in a realm *beyond* strategy, the admonitions of Henry, Zbig, and the Council on Foreign Relations notwithstanding.

V

Perhaps none of this would have mattered if—*pace* George Bush—people had "listened" to the presumed lessons of the Gulf War. Alas, they did not. It soon became evident that the post-Cold War international order would be anything but orderly, a development that might properly have inspired caution but instead flushed a covey of neo-Wilsonians eager to create a humane and democratic world and contemptuous of those pusillanimous souls reluctant to join their crusade.

Combined with the void left by the demise of containment, this drumbeat of advocacy swept aside the old notion that force was properly an option of last resort. The suggestion—seldom stated outright—that military power might henceforth constitute a preferred instrument of American statecraft created a mood conducive to unprecedented activism. Neither restrained by politics nor guided by strategy, policymakers casting about for a basis for action took their cues from opinion polls and television. In short order, such serendipity produced operations Provide Comfort (northern Iraq) and Restore Hope (Somalia), the names alone speaking volumes about the new orientation of American defense policy.

It should be emphasized that enthusiasm for this new activism was not confined to a fringe of leftish do-gooders. It pervaded the mainstream. With their reflexive support for all things military, many conservatives went along for the ride. To illustrate the point, one magazine editorial may stand for many. In summoning the United States to "recognize and act upon the promise of the Gulf War," the magazine's editors advocate "the wise use" of America's "battle-tested technology" to "promote a more peaceful world." Just as the Royal Navy in an earlier era had "employed gunboats to help suppress the slave trade and to deter or punish foreign bullies," so the United States today can employ "smart bombs and cruise missiles" to "obliterate aggressive forces with minimal casualties of our own." "Astonishingly," comment the editors, "we haven't done that in Serbia, whose murderous acts are . . . setting a horrid example." This call to arms captures the essence of the new orthodoxy about war: the rapture for technology; the certainty that a high-tech military provides handy solutions to otherwise daunting problems; the belief that possession of this capability bestows on Americans not simply an opportunity but an obligation to correct the world's ills. The source of this counsel? Not some obscure periodical of fashionably progressive leanings, but the sleek and presumably hardheaded Capitalist Tool, *Forbes*.

Thus, by the time Bill Clinton became commander-in-chief in January of 1993, whimsy and expediency had already achieved virtual primacy among the determinants of American military policy. Although the Clintonites themselves were not primarily responsible for this unraveling of American thinking about defense, throughout the campaign season—particularly in their glib promises to sort out such sticky problems as Bosnia and Haiti—they had endorsed the premises of the new orthodoxy. Once in office, they embraced it as their own.

This embrace was not without irony. The Clinton succession after all derives much of its putative significance from the assertion that it brings to power the generation forged by Vietnam. That rendering is,

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at best, imprecise. More accurately, the Clinton Administration brings to power those who evaded service in Vietnam or who opposed the war and still wear that opposition as a badge of honor and indication of enlightenment. By contrast, those who actually fought the war tend to be conspicuous in the Administration's inner circle by their absence.

Thus does Providence manifest its quirky sense of humor. Those who in the tenderness of youth decried the "arrogance" of American power and the evils inherent in the promiscuous use of force were handed a military instrument of awesome capability at a time when the depoliticization of defense policy and confusion with regard to strategy loosened the usual constraints on its use.

Arguably, such a generation, having imbibed the "lessons" of Vietnam, would have proceeded in gingerly fashion: appraising with circumspection the threats, near-term and distant, facing the nation; evaluating realistically—even skeptically—the utility of military power in responding to those threats; striving to convey by its actions, in matters large and small, a sense of resolution along with modesty of purpose.

Yet in military matters the Clinton Administration during its first year exhibited neither clarity nor realism nor restraint. Instead, it engaged in a series of initiatives notable for being either half-hearted or half-baked. By claiming that important U.S. interests were engaged in Bosnia and then doing next to nothing to resolve that tragedy, the Clinton Administration gave credence to the charge of American complicity in the ongoing slaughter. Yet as the Balkans blazed, a well-heeled American armored corps rested comfortably in its casernes throughout Germany. Preparing for what? The revival of the Warsaw Pact?

Meanwhile, through fecklessness or inattention, the Administration shambled to the brink of its own quagmire in Somalia. The failure of a manhunt aimed at eliminating the Somali warlord implicated in killing several Americans—a failure resulting in still more American deaths—presented Clinton with the unpalatable choices of open-ended escalation or humiliating withdrawal. Opting for the latter, American officials rehabilitated their erstwhile prey, according him VIP treatment and squiring him about in U.S. military aircraft.

Administration efforts to resolve the Haitian crisis likewise led to fiasco. Vowing to restore democracy to Haiti without considering what that commitment might require, the Administration drifted into an unwanted showdown, one that it evaded by allowing the vaunted American military to be "dissed" by Haitian thugs masquerading as soldiers.

Finally, as 1993 drew to a close, Clinton faced the first test of his commitment to nonproliferation. Having declared emphatically that North Korea would *not* be permitted to acquire nuclear weapons, the President was immediately undercut by hand-wringing experts who lamented that American options were limited and that in any conflict with the North—backward and isolated even by Communist standards—heavy U.S. casualties would be unavoidable. The White House was soon backpedalling, confessing that it might tacitly accept whatever nuclear capability North Korea had already managed to develop.

Thus did the American people, their lofty expectations and good intentions battered by a succession of incidents, discover that the legacy of the Cold War and the Gulf was not to eliminate controversies about what it meant to defend America. The real legacy was to create new controversies in place of the old.

VI

How will this discovery affect the constituency that since Vietnam has provided the core of support for a "strong America," that votes for candidates committed to a powerful defense establishment, and that sees reflected in the military the values they espouse for the nation as a whole? Two alternatives exist. One is that they will find it possible to rally to this President despite his early bungling as commander-in-chief. They may, for example, find the Administration's much-touted vision of "enlarging democracy and enlarging markets" worthy of their support. Requiring defense outlays only slightly less munificent than those of the Cold War, the so-called Strategy of Enlargement—with its whiff of righteous (and commercially advantageous) neo-imperialism—promises to satisfy the most ardent proponent of American globalism. As a substitute for their old mission of deterring Soviet expansionism, America's post-Cold War armed forces, their "deployability" and "flexibility" enhanced at substantial expense, can busy themselves with "regional contingencies"—a term of sufficient elasticity to apply to virtually any crisis: yesterday Somalia, today North Korea, tomorrow who knows what threat to democracy and free enterprise?

Yet the furor provoked by a minor setback like last October's firefight in Mogadishu hints at a second possibility. Middle America's views about what it means to defend the nation and how best to implement that defense may be on the verge of a great transformation. As was the case in the 1960s, military considerations alone will not explain the attitudes about to emerge.

Recall that a mix of both strategic and political concerns motivated ordinary citizens during the 1960s and beyond to persist in their vision of a "strong America." Having concluded after World War II that the Soviet Union was a dangerous and implacable foe, they would not budge from that belief. Thus, despite Vietnam (and sundry other miscalculations), middle Americans refused to abandon what

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the left derisively tagged the Anti-Communist Crusade. Ill-disposed toward radicalism in any form, these same Americans were downright hostile to any effort to upend the status quo within the United States itself. Thus, despite the weight of the counterculture's critique in the 1960s, they clung to the conservative disposition that was their political birthright.

Today both international conditions and the nation's domestic political setting have changed. The Soviet Union has vanished. As an alternative to democratic capitalism, communism has been permanently discredited. As a result, the strategic aims that justified popular support for the huge American military establishment of the Cold War have been fully secured. The likelihood of any credible near-term challenge to American security is remote—whether mounted by an imperial power comparable to Germany in 1914-1918 or Japan in the 1930s or growing out of ideological competition such as led to the European War of 1939-1945 and to the Cold War.

To be sure, the United States will not lack for nations and movements bearing it ill-will. Yet absent a truly ominous threat, the compliant citizens who filled the Pentagon's coffers will become more insistent about asking what their tax dollars are purchasing. They will want to know why—to cite current examples—procurement of the C17 cargo plane continues despite acknowledged design flaws and cost overruns so massive that the price tag of a single aircraft exceeds the entire sum authorized for President Clinton's much ballyhooed National and Community Service Corps during its first year. They will question the need for a new fleet of strategic bombers that stand to cost the taxpayer $2.2 billion a pop. When their sons are gunned down in places like Mogadishu and their mutilated bodies are dragged through the streets, they will demand some explanation of the larger purpose being served. By way of response, the usual incantation of National Security will no longer suffice. In short the strategic rationale for a "strong America" is a wasting asset.

So too is the political rationale. Indeed, expectations that military strength would somehow help preserve core American values have proven to be illusory. The idea that the armed forces are bastions of those values was questionable from the outset. More to the point, conservatives are today waking up to the fact that while they were busily cheering on the military, the left was quietly and adroitly transforming American political culture. Even the Reagan "revolution" was a sham, at most a brief pause in the process whereby the left radically redefined concepts like freedom, equality, privacy, and pluralism. In the academy, the mass media, the courts, and the legislatures, those new definitions have become entrenched. They now determine the agenda of American politics. They have also sown confusion about moral values, contributed to the disintegration of the social order, promoted self-indulgence and the cult of victimization, and encouraged the balkanization of American society. They have empowered new elites who no longer bother to conceal their contempt for the antiquarian and philistine values of middle America.

For ordinary citizens unhappy with the trends evident in society, the lesson becomes increasingly clear: the accumulation of military power has become a diversion. Striding self-importantly across the world stage as has been the allotted American role during the last half century detracts from the primary struggle, which in the wake of the Cold War lies indisputably at home.

For something like a half century, the politics of defending America seemed inextricably linked to the cause of defending freedom. Events abroad have vindicated that undertaking. History will honor the statesmen who conceived it: men like Truman, Marshall, Acheson, and Eisenhower. Likewise—and properly—history will commemorate those from whom the Cold War exacted the ultimate sacrifice, often in circumstances so ambiguous or bizarre as to defy understanding apart from the context of the larger struggle. Yet those most deserving credit are least likely to receive it: the ordinary citizens who remained resolute in their opposition to totalitarianism and in their faith in America, who imparted to successive Presidents the authority that enabled the United States to reassure or persuade or deter, and who offered up their sons to fight inglorious wars or to garrison lonely outposts.

It is precisely these middle Americans who are likely to revise their views of what it now means to defend the nation. Awakened to the absurdity of thinking that rescuing distant peoples from their own folly can reverse our own cultural and moral decline, they are discovering that, under today's conditions, prospects for a society respectful of individual freedom yet preserving its traditional moral foundation may be at odds with acting the part of military superpower. FT

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Why We Need Interreligious Polemics

Paul J. Griffiths

The intellectual life is essentially and constitutively agonistic. It progresses almost entirely by struggle, by challenge and response, by thesis and antithesis, by getting it wrong and then moving, always asymptotically, toward getting it right. Hegel was wrong, so far as I can tell, about most things, but he was right at least about this: the movement of thought is, in the sense just mentioned, dialectical. Nagarjuna, the second-century Buddhist philosopher, was, if possible, wrong about even more than Hegel, but he too was right at least about the unavoidable necessity of reasoned argument for the maintenance of ethical and epistemic respectability.

If the intellectual life is like this, if struggle is its blood and bone, then one ought to expect those who think rightly about it to delight in and deploy the imagery and metaphors of battle and war to capture its flavor. And so they do. If you like Buddhist examples, consider the famous image, found in numerous Indian Buddhist works from the first century onward, of the two magical warriors, neither of whom has enduring independent existence, battling one another until both cease to exist: this is an image, for its users, of the nature of argument, but it is also an image that has vitally important soteriological implications, a point that I shall return to later. And you don't have to read far in current English-language philosophy to stumble over (or delight in, depending upon your tastes) similarly martial imagery: philosophers marshal their forces; they propose defeators; they proffer knock-down, drag-out arguments; they line up their propositions and schemata of argument like so many tin soldiers.

This sort of thing is what I mean by the word "polemics." I take it to denote an intellectual virtue. Perhaps more precisely, I take it to denote a mode of intellectual engagement that flows directly from a proper and clear realization of what serious intellectual work is for and how it should best proceed. If you properly engage in this work, you will be interested in arriving at a position on whatever it is that interests you (philosophy, critical theory, history, philology, literary criticism, or whatever) that is preferable to any other that you know of on that question, and you will concomitantly want to be clear as to what the position that you construct and defend is, what it excludes, how best to show that its competitors are less adequate than the one you want to defend, and in what sense this is true. "Polemics," as I use it here, does not denote or connote simple hostility, or opposition for its own sake—even though the term has come to mean something like this in ordinary English usage. It points, rather, to the kind of engagement that does and should occur when those who take what they believe seriously encounter others equally serious about, and committed to, their beliefs.

Now, in many areas of the academy the above is sufficiently obvious to be regarded as a truism, something that hardly needs saying. Most members of most philosophy departments would, I think, have no trouble with it; so would most members of most literature departments, most jurists, most historians, and so forth. Consider, as an example, the controversies surrounding the recent work of Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin on the ethical and jurisprudential implications of pornography: their conclusion is that pornography, by its very existence, makes the exercise of full citizenship an impossibility for women, and that therefore making such literature illegal is not only consistent with, but is properly implied by, the Constitution of the United States. On the other side of this debate, classical liberals like Ronald Dworkin think that all this is dangerously false, and argue for its falsity. This is a splendid ex-

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ample of the agony (in the technical etymological sense) of the intellectual life. Or, if you prefer philosophical examples, consider the recent debates between proponents of a unified cognitive science, a science that would demonstrate mental events to be either strictly identical with physical events or epiphenomena of them—people like Daniel Dennett and Patricia Churchland—and those who think that there is a philosophically irreducible difference between the physical and the mental—that is, people like Thomas Nagel and John Searle.

But there are some areas of the academy, and of the cultural life of the English-speaking world in general, where these obvious truths about the essentially polemical nature of the intellectual life are called into question, even systematically rejected. The most striking and institutionally prominent instance of this is to be found in departments of religious studies in universities and colleges, but it is present also in theology departments, divinity schools, and the like. Anywhere, in fact, where religion is the central topic, it seems that the polemical dimensions of the intellectual life are swept under the rug, or treated as the kind of embarrassment that reasonable people ought to pretend isn't there. If this is true in general wherever religion is studied, it is even more true where different religious traditions are studied, or where representatives of different religious traditions are brought together under the same institutional roof for conversation. Why, in such contexts, should there be a repudiation of the *agon*, the struggle for truth?

One important reason has to do with the prominence in such settings of the judgment that the term "interreligious dialogue" labels the only proper mode for intercourse among religious communities. This term, now a numinous one, denotes what Michel Foucault would call a discursive formation or practice, an activity, that is, for which there is a definite institutional and theoretical place in the culture, an activity that now has a fairly lengthy history and that has produced its own bureaucratic organizations, organs of publication, and professional experts. All this means that interreligious dialogue is something already firmly in cultural place; like baseball, deconstruction, or adultery, it is a game whose rules one must understand and abide by if one is to be a proper player. It is, moreover, a discursive practice with strictly imperialistic tendencies: it wants and intends that its rules and modes of procedure should be the dominant (even the only) ones in play when the game has to do with intercourse among different religious communities.

Such dialogue is also a practice that ought to cease: it has no discernible benefits, many negative effects, and is based upon a radical misapprehension of the nature and significance of religious commitments. It is the kind of discursive practice that makes sense only in a culture without genuine awareness of its own religious and intellectual roots. It fosters a morally dubious kind of syncretism, an attitude toward the religion of the other that is strictly and precisely analogous to the attitude of those nineteenth-century British empire-builders who plundered the world and brought its treasures back to the British Museum to be preserved and meditated upon by the British cultural elite of that day. When a contemporary Jesuit from Boston teaches a Buddhist mindfulness technique to his flock or an ecumenically minded Tibetan lama expropriates a Christian prayer, we have something analogous to John Ruskin's rhapsodies about the Elgin marbles, or Henry Steele Olcott's attempts to tell Sinhalese Buddhists what their religion was really all about. If these latter things were morally dubious, then so are their analogues today: no religious person's beliefs and practices are proper objects for plunder and expropriation by anyone; and calling them "interreligious dialogue" doesn't make them any more respectable.

What, then, is the cultural place of this particular discursive practice, and what are its historical roots? Interreligious dialogue can be seen in its purest form, perhaps, in the activities of the World Council of Churches. This organization, an umbrella bureaucracy on the model of the United Nations that brings together representatives of most Protestant denominations, has as part of its monstrously complicated structure a "Sub-Unit on Dialogue with Peoples of Living Faiths and Ideologies." The language is that of the multinational corporation or, what is the same, of the multinational aid organization. Bureaucrats from the World Health Organization or from International Chemical Industries could move happily and directly into the World Council of Churches without having to learn new methods, new ways of thinking, or indeed anything new at all except how to substitute lexical items from religious bureauspeak for those they already know. There is a Roman Catholic analogue for this in the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, an organization that has been in place in one form or another, and with various names, since shortly after the end of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, and that took its present name in 1988. (Immediately before that it was called the "Secretariat for Non-Christians"; the change of name, if you think about it for a while, is quite revealing.)

The purpose of these organizations, and of their local offspring and analogues, is principally to sponsor discussions, and sometimes joint action, among members of different religious communities—Buddhist, Christian, Confucian, Jewish, Hindu, and so on. The discussions at such meetings are characteristically of a single rhetorical kind and have a single effective goal. The rhetoric is always irenic, never argumentative; the goal is always understanding, never

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refutation. Certain topics and themes are, de facto, ruled out of court, most especially awkward questions about truth, and about the universalistic aspirations of most religious communities. As examples of the former: if what most Christians think about Jesus of Nazareth is true, then what most Muslims think about him must be false; if what most Buddhists think about the nature of human persons is true, then what most Jews think about this must be false . . . and so on. As examples of the latter: if the baptism of all human persons in the triune name is a desideratum and is alone productive of salvation, as many Christians believe (and as the Gospel of Matthew seems explicitly to claim), then it is false that the chanting of the *"nam myoho range kyo"* is the principle means of human salvation, as some Japanese Buddhists claim.

Serious discussion of questions like these is ruled out in principle by those institutions that have created interreligious dialogue as a recognizable discursive formation in our culture, and also almost always ignored in Western academic institutions, which really ought to know better. The result of this systematic evisceration of religious claims is almost always the adumbrating of a set of vacuous claims upon which, it is supposed, all religious persons can agree; and such claims are usually expressed in a language and with a tone that is more appropriate to the nurture of an infant than to the intellectual challenge of an adult.

As an example, consider the declaration of the ethical principles supposedly common to all religions promulgated at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in the summer of 1993. This declaration limits itself, as given its assumptions and method of proceeding it was inevitable that it should, to claims of such vagueness and generality that it would be hard for anyone to disagree about them, but equally hard for anyone to get excited about them—much less to structure his life around them or be prepared to die for them. To say that all religious communities recognize the right of people not to be tortured, or that all religious communities support the self-determination of indigenous peoples is not very exciting: even if these claims are true (and I suspect that they are not), they bear little relation to any claim that a faithful member of any religious community would recognize as his own. Such attempts at saying things that every religious community can agree upon are about as useful to a serious Christian or a serious Buddhist as a pacifier is to anyone over the age of four.

This kind of well-meaning but finally destructive inanity is entirely typical of what goes on under the rubric of "interreligious dialogue," whether sponsored by the multinational religious bureaucracies or a local university. How have things come to this pass? To give a full answer to this would require a detailed and complex cultural and intellectual history, something beyond the scope of this essay. Here, however, are a few preliminary observations.

The first is that interreligious dialogue of the kind described above has a fairly short history, and is almost exclusively a product of the postcolonialist West. If we want to mark its beginning, 1893 is as good a date as any. It was then that the first World's Parliament of Religions took place in Chicago, an occasion of considerable importance in that it was the first time that a public event of any scale (it was part of the World's Fair taking place in Chicago that year) had included representatives from many of the world's religious communities and given them an opportunity to speak and be heard. Among the more prominent participants were the Anagarika Dharmapala, a Buddhist from Sri Lanka (or Ceylon, as it was then called), and Swami Vivekananda, a popularizer and exporter of the neo-Vedantin ideas of Sri Ramakrishna.

Why did this happen when and where it did? Well, as to when, it is far from accidental that this Parliament was called together at a time when the expansionism of the Western colonial empires was drawing to a close. One hundred years ago the English were coming to realize, even if inchoately, that the sun was about to set on the empire that fifty years earlier had seemed invincible and ever-expanding. Queen Victoria, the Empress of India among many other things, was eight years from her death, but it was evident that Indians were no longer, could no longer be, simply colonial subjects: Gandhi was arriving in South Africa after completing his studies in London, and Indian independence, which stands as the very paradigm of the end of empire, was only a little more than fifty years in the future.

In this situation, Western Christians could no longer speak from a position of unproblematic superiority: they were beginning to realize the depth and moral dubiousness of their involvement with the colonial enterprise, and to think that one way of atoning for their sins might be to give a voice to the religious other. Postcolonialist guilt, then, was and remains one of the major motivations for the development of and engagement in interreligious dialogue. Notice what this entails: postcolonialist guilt is after all a problem only for colonialists, which means, if such guilt is indeed a major motivation for interreligious dialogue, that it is likely to be only they who will be seriously interested in it. And in 1893, as now, it is almost exclusively Christians (or post-Christians) who find this activity interesting enough to sponsor and encourage it. Buddhists, Jews, and the rest will come to the table out of politeness, or with their own quite different agendas, but they're not really interested.

As for the question of why interreligious dialogue should have had its first major public outing in the United States, and why it has flourished here more

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than in any other country since, this is slightly more complicated. After all, the United States in 1893 was not at the end of a period of empire-building, but rather at the beginning. There are other factors in play in the specifically American situation. The United States is the country where, more than any other, the ideal of a religiously tolerant political order has been enshrined in a constitution, and interpreted by the judiciary, in such a way as to attempt a consistent separation between church and state. Whatever one thinks about the merits of this, it is beyond doubt that one of the effects of this attempt has been the radical privatization of religion. For most Americans, religious belief and practice have become a matter of private preference, something whose importance may be great for the individual but about which it is bad taste to argue and even worse taste to appeal to as a matter of import for the shaping of public policy.

My own experience in teaching religion and theology to middle- and upper-middle-class undergraduates and graduate students in America for the past decade or so certainly suggests that this way of thinking about religion fits neatly with a strong tendency toward the kind of knee-jerk relativism that is also widespread among those in the same social strata. For most Americans, religion is probably more like golf or football than anything else: an activity that happens mostly on the weekends, that may arouse strong passions, but that is very much a matter of personal taste. Americans are notoriously more religiously observant and active than the inhabitants of any other Western democracy—much more, for example, than those of my native England; but they are, for the most part, observant in ways that betray a deep misunderstanding of what religious commitment is and what it demands, a misunderstanding that parallels exactly that which is evident in the practice of interreligious dialogue.

What goes on under the aegis of the World Council of Churches' Sub-Unit on Dialogue with Peoples of Living Faiths and Ideologies parallels in fascinating ways what goes on in American public elementary school Christmas celebrations. Both my children are in such a school, and the songs sung at the Christmas celebrations in their school provide a striking example of the American situation. Clearly, traditional Christmas carols can't be sung (there's a large university near where I live that attracts graduate students from all over the world, as well as a substantial local Jewish community, and probably not more than 60 or 70 percent of the children at the school are from even nominally Christian households), so most of the singing is of songs of the saccharine-secular genre—songs like "White Christmas." But there are also some attempts at deploying religious imagery in an inclusive rather than a tradition-specific way, most of them very heavy-handed. My personal favorite is a song whose dirge-like chorus includes the refrain "Candles of Hanukkah, Candles of Christmas." This is guaranteed, I think, to offend both serious and thoughtful Jews and serious and thoughtful Christians, and to either exclude or upset serious Muslims, Buddhists, or whatever. Its other inevitable effect is to foster and nurture the messages that this culture already sends about religious commitments: since they're really all the same, it doesn't matter which you have.

I have suggested, first, that polemical argument and confrontation are integral and essential to the intellectual life, and that any attempt systematically to remove them from that life is dangerous and, in the end, incoherent. Second, what goes for the intellectual life goes also for the religious life. Third, what goes for the intellectual life in general, and for the religious life in particular, ought to be evident also in the interactions among different religious communities, that here, too, serious and argumentative engagement ought to be a part of the enterprise. And fourth, the cultural practice that we call "interreligious dialogue" militates against precisely such engagements and, in so doing, trivializes and eviscerates religious commitments and practices. More must now be said about why, conceptually, it is important to see that religious commitment involves making serious claims as to the nature of things, what the setting of human life is like, as well as serious claims as to how human persons should behave in that setting.

In arguing against the possibility of attaining to a neutral standpoint on matters of concern to religious persons, one begins with the axiom that all human activity—and so, by extension, all scholarly activity, all religious activity, and all interaction among serious religious persons—both implies and evinces a commitment to some particular metaphysic, some view as to the way things are and as to how human activity should proceed in that context. From this axiom it follows that no human activity (including, again, all scholarly activity, all religious activity, and all interaction among serious religious persons) can be neutral with regard to any particular metaphysic. It should be obvious why: if all human activities imply some particular metaphysic, and every metaphysic contains or implies some set of views as to how things are and how human life should go on, then clearly a position of neutrality on metaphysical questions is a theoretical impossibility. Thus any human activity that presents itself as being metaphysically neutral is guilty at best of pretense and at worst of deceit. Now, it is characteristic of interreligious dialogue that those who provide the institutional context for it typically disallow, both rhetorically and actually, the thematization of the metaphysical understandings that in fact inform the practices of all participants in it. This is an instance of what I meant by pretense or deceit. A similar conclusion follows for

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those within academic institutions who claim to study religion from a metaphysically neutral standpoint: they don't because they can't, and it would be far better to acknowledge this publicly and explicitly than to sweep it under the rug. Practitioners of both the academic study of religion and of interreligious dialogue are, then, just metaphysicians who don't know themselves as such; or (worse) metaphysicians who do know themselves but haven't the courage of their convictions.

It is an intellectual virtue to be as self-conscious as possible about the metaphysical commitments implied and evinced by one's own intellectual activity, and to make them, to the extent possible, a public and overt part of the products of that activity. So, for instance, if it is not clear to the readers of my work that my writing is done by an Episcopalian Christian, I will have failed to practice this virtue—which, of course, includes my making clear at which points the materials I study or engage seem to me false, noxious, or incomplete; just as it includes my making clear when and in what ways it seems to me that the materials I engage are true, have taught me something I didn't know before, or may be of use to me and my community in its search to apprehend and incarnate the gospel. Insisting upon this definition of virtue would immediately have enormous benefits and would immediately transform the ways in which serious religious persons interact with one another, as well as the ways in which the scholarly study of religion is carried on. It would also, I hope, go some way toward remedying the privatization and trivialization of religious commitment that is so endemic to both American culture in general and to academic institutions in particular.

For those who have them, religious commitments are the most important thing there is, and they cannot but enter explicitly into everything that their possessors do. If, indeed, the word "religion" signifies anything at all, then we should take its most salient characteristic to be the provision of a complete and unsurpassable context for everything that a religious person does, thinks, and is. Eating dinner isn't like this; making love isn't like this; national identity isn't, for most of us, like this: all these are mere parts of our identity, elements to be placed in a larger and more encompassing context. But our religion, if we have one, is precisely that which cannot be so encompassed: it provides a context for, and an explanation of, everything else about us, and indeed for everything period. There is no larger context, no frame for the understanding of my religion that encompasses it: it can only encompass, it cannot be encompassed; it cannot be seen as an instance of something, but only as the context within which all instances of things occur. This is what makes religious commitments so interesting, and so dangerous. To treat them as though they were less serious and less interesting than this is to misunderstand and mistreat them, as interreligious dialogue and much of the academic study of religion typically do. If this view of religion is right, then it follows that as a scholar and a religious person I must be explicit about the kinds of religious commitments I have and the ways in which they enter into my intellectual activity.

How, then, should interactions among religious communities proceed?

Christians, specifically, ought to recover and use a word with an important lineage in Christian theology, a word that captures much of what I have been arguing for. The word is "apologetics." Its meaning in traditional use has nothing to do with the contemporary sense of the verb "to apologize," denoting instead reasoned argument in defense of what one takes to be true against views that one takes to be false—against, that is, potential or actual challengers to one's own beliefs. It is a term historically associated with argument in support of specifically religious claims, but it is a more widely applicable intellectual virtue. Religious communities—or at least some of their members—have both a moral and intellectual duty to engage in polemics. That is, they are under both ethical and epistemic obligations to argue for the truth of what they take themselves to believe when they are faced with religious others who appear to believe something different and to act differently based upon such difference in belief.

Suppose, to make this abstraction concrete, that I, as a member of a particular religious community—in my case, as I have said, the communion of Anglican Christians—find myself in contact with a Gelukpa Tibetan Buddhist who, so far as I can tell, believes and teaches things that I think are incompatible with what I believe and teach. Suppose further that the incompatibilities appear to me not superficial and uninteresting but profound and deep-going. Suppose still further that my interlocutor and I are in a situation in which neither is offering the other any threat of physical violence. In such a circumstance, I would be failing in my ethical and intellectual duties if I did not engage my interlocutor, with seriousness and passion, as to the truth of what he teaches. I would be failing ethically because I take my beliefs to be not merely true, but of profound importance for all human persons. This is because they are religious beliefs, and so are properly universal in their scope. To pretend, out of politeness or fear, that my Buddhist interlocutor does not need to know about beliefs that are, so far as I can tell, both true and of vital importance to his eternal well-being would be a dramatic kind of moral failure: analogous to refusing the offer of help and correction to a person whose beliefs and practices appear to be leading him straight into dire physical danger. I must, therefore, if I am to behave with moral integrity, engage my interlocutor.

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And in addition to the moral argument for the necessity of interreligious apologetics, there is also a strictly intellectual one, having to do with my epistemic duties. If I take my religious beliefs to be both properly universal in scope and properly salvific in effect, and it comes to seem to me (as in fact it does) that my Buddhist interlocutor has beliefs that he also takes to be properly universal in scope and properly salvific in effect, and that his beliefs are not compatible with mine, then his beliefs—call them, for the sake of brevity, alien religious claims, recognizing that my beliefs are, of course, alien to him—act as potential defeators to mine. They, if they are true, appear to make mine false in at least some respects—as mine in turn do them. In such a situation one cannot remain epistemically justified in having the beliefs one has without engaging the alien claims as potential defeators and seeing, to the best of one's ability, whether they do in fact defeat. My interlocutor, of course, is under the same intellectual duty as I. This purely intellectual argument applies much more broadly, of course, than simply to matters religious; but it applies to them also.

Thus in the situation I have sketched, if I am to preserve ethical and epistemic respectability, I am required to engage in interreligious apologetics. But notice a couple of things about this argument. It is couched entirely in terms of how things seem to the participants in the potential apologetical engagement. The argument doesn't require that the beliefs held by the people involved actually be incompatible one with another; it requires only that this seem to them to be the case. So it might seem to me that my Buddhist interlocutor has crazed views about impermanence, the transience of all things, and the absence of any enduring principle that constitutes the identity of human persons; while I have more sensible metaphysical views that require a substance-based ontology and a theory as to what constitutes human persons that permits them to endure through time. But in fact the incompatibility between us need not be actual. It might turn out, for instance, that after an apologetical engagement has begun—I might offer my Buddhist interlocutor what I take to be six conclusive arguments, say, as to why he should abandon his view that all existents are impermanent—I discover that the incompatibility that had seemed to me so profound, deep-going, and unavoidable turns out to be merely apparent. The differences, perhaps, were rhetorical rather than real, and the conclusion of our debate is that we learn that we are fundamentally at one on important metaphysical questions. Or, alternatively (and more likely in this case), we discover as our debate progresses that our differences are even more important and thoroughgoing than we first thought.

The important points that flow from this are two. The first is that interreligious polemics, in addition to the moral and intellectual benefits already mentioned, is a heuristic tool of very great power. It leads, or it may lead, to important discoveries about the inner logic of religious belief-systems. By trying to disprove Buddhist metaphysics and having kind Buddhist friends argue back, I might, for instance, have come to understand the subject much better than I otherwise would have. They may have shown me that I don't really understand the position I'm arguing against; or they may have offered me arguments in support of their position to which I could not find an answer. They may have shown me, by their responses, that what I had taken to be a profound and important disagreement on fundamental matters is really no such thing. There would have been no other way I could have discovered these things—certainly not by engaging in the pallid and platitudinous mutual congratulation that usually goes on under the rubric of interreligious dialogue. This learning process goes in the other direction as well: I am likely to learn a great deal about the inner logic and systematic connections among my own religious beliefs by subjecting them to a polemical engagement, things, again, that I could learn in no other way.

Secondly, my understanding of interreligious polemics is not predicated, as some traditional understandings have been, on an assumption of unrevisability and indefeasibility. I do not, that is, assume from the outset that what I and my religious community take to be true, that around which we structure our lives and hopes, is necessarily and unrevisably so. I may be wrong, in small things and in large, and a good apologetical engagement may show me that I am. This is an important qualification for a number of reasons, most obviously that if one of the justifications for engagement in interreligious polemics is that it is heuristically valuable (as are its analogues in other dimensions of the intellectual life), then obviously revision, alteration, and abandonment of passionately held religious views must be a possibility. It should be said, though, that very often the possibility of revision will not be a lively one, and this too is perfectly appropriate. Catharine MacKinnon, to return to one of the examples mentioned earlier, is extremely unlikely to become a conservative Baptist as a result of apologetical engagement with Billy Graham; and I am rather unlikely to decide that I have no mental life and that disembodied existence is not a possibility for me as a result of polemical engagement with Patricia Churchland. But both these things are possibilities, and must be self-consciously kept in mind as possibilities by serious participants in interreligious polemics.

There is a methodological corollary to the theoretical point about defeasibility. It is that interreligious polemics, properly understood, cannot use a community-specific self-guaranteeing authority-source as a proper tool of debate. If I want to argue with my

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Gelukpa Buddhist friends, it is of no use to quote the Bible to them as an authoritative text, and hope to get anywhere thereby—not, at least, unless I'm prepared to offer a prior and independent argument as to why the Bible should be regarded as an authoritative text. To generalize this point, we should say that a properly constituted interreligious polemic should deploy as methods of argument and proof only tools that are recognized as authoritative and demonstrative by both sides. This will create difficulties and constraints at times, but these constraints, too, have their payoff.

In conclusion, three caveats. The first has to do with the constraints that should be placed upon interreligious polemic. Such polemic is proper, morally speaking, only in situations where no other threats are present. That is, if one's interlocutor is being threatened with violence, torture, or death at the same time as he is being confronted with a polemical argument, and if the outcome of the latter determines whether he is killed, tortured, forcibly converted, or whatever (this was, of course, the case for many Jews in medieval Europe), then it is exceedingly doubtful that the polemic is morally proper. A similar case can be made in situations where interreligious polemic is accompanied by large-scale political or economic imperialism, as may have been the case in India when Christian missionaries began polemically to engage Brahman intellectuals. This is a more complex scenario, though, because the extent and nature of the complicity between representatives of religious communities and expansionist colonial powers is often hard to assess, and conclusions about it must of necessity be context-specific. This case is meant only to illustrate that I am not arguing that interreligious polemic is always and everywhere the best or only appropriate mode of interreligious conversation.

The second caveat has to do with just who ought to practice interreligious polemics. The reader might have been led to think that all seriously religious persons ought never to be doing anything else. But this is not what is intended. Communities as a whole may have duties that are not incumbent upon all of their members. This is obvious, for instance, in the case of nations: the nation as a whole has a duty to provide a transportation system and educational institutions for its citizens, but it is not the case that each citizen has a duty to be involved in such provision. Similarly for religious communities. The duty to engage in polemics is one that will typically bind a community and will, consequently, bind only some of its members. Just which members are so bound will depend upon variables specific to particular communities—such things as the authority structures in place, or the function of representative intellectuals. But it would obviously be as silly to say that all religious persons are bound by a duty to engage in polemics as it would be to say that all Jews are bound by a duty to become rabbis.

The third caveat is specific to Christians, and has to do with the singular nature of the relations between Christians and Jews. The phrase interreligious dialogue has, since the 1960s, largely suggested for most Christians and most Jews discussions between representatives of their respective traditions, and only incidentally discussions between either and representatives of Islamic or Hindu or Buddhist communities. There are obvious and important historical reasons for this, reasons that stretch from the decision made by Christians in the first century of our history that circumcision and observance of the law were not necessary for entry into the Christian community, to the tragedy of the Holocaust in our own time. That most Christians have been anti-Semitic throughout this long history is no longer news, and is hardly controversial (though the nature of the connections between our traditional anti-Semitism and our Christian faith is a matter for debate and further clarification). But these historical connections render decisions by Christians and Jews as to how best to interact with one another—and so also decisions as to the proper uses of polemic—extremely delicate. General principles cannot, in my opinion, be laid down at this stage of the (still young) Jewish-Christian dialogue; but when polemic is undertaken in such dialogues, it must always be done in careful and clear awareness of the unpleasant uses to which such polemics have often been put by Christians in the past.

Bearing this in mind, we can nevertheless see that being religious entails having intellectual commitments whose scope is universal; that the institutionally dominant modes under which interaction among serious religious persons now occurs, both within the academy and outside it, largely prevents the airing of intellectual differences, and so inevitably trivializes religious commitments; and that if this distressing situation is to be remedied, the rehabilitation of interreligious polemics is essential. FT

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Politics of Virtues, Government of Knaves

J. Budziszewski

Laws politic, ordained for external order and regiment among men, are never framed as they should be, unless presuming the will of man to be inwardly obstinate, rebellious, and averse from all obedience unto the sacred laws of his nature; in a word, unless presuming man to be in regard of his depraved mind little better than a wild beast, they do accordingly provide notwithstanding so to frame his outward actions, that they be no hindrance unto the common good for which societies are instituted: unless they do this, they are not perfect. It resteth therefore that we consider how nature findeth out such laws of government as serve to direct even nature depraved to a right end.

—Richard Hooker

It is, therefore, a just political maxim that every man must be supposed a knave, though at the same time it appears somewhat strange that a maxim should be true in politics which is false in fact.

—David Hume

The First Lady has been described in the *New York Times Magazine* as a proponent of the "politics of virtue." Compassion is the virtue to which the author refers and while in ordinary life it means that A gives of his own to help B, in Mrs. Clinton's style of activism it means that A takes from C to make B dependent. Apparently, what the "politics of virtue" means to the author is a high-tax welfare state.

Political theory uses an almost identical expression, the "politics of virtues," for something quite different: an approach to statecraft that gives first place to considerations of excellence of character. To be sure, the proponent cares about the other things, but he begins by thinking of the virtues. Before all else, he wants to know how wise, how just, how temperate, and how courageous the citizens are, and whether they are becoming better people or worse. The principal reason is simple. As de Maistre put it, every country gets the government it deserves. One cannot expect liberty, justice, or concern for the common good where knaves rule a rabble. So much we should have learned by now.

Here's the rub: we are a broken race in a fallen world. For denying the Atonement a man may be faithless, but for denying its need he is insane. We are all caught in the wreck. Hence the single greatest problem of politics is simply this: how can we make government promote the common good when there is so little virtue to be found?

By my count, Western thought records just seven general solutions. There is, first, deterrence, according to which acts of vice must be inhibited by the threat of legal punishment. Second is filtration, which counsels that officeholders must be recruited disproportionately from among the most virtuous. Then there is compensation, whereby citizens must be organized in such a way that excess and deficiency correct each other, and all the scattered chips of insight come together in a whole. Next comes balance: selfish groups must be set against each other so that vice is checked and virtue given leverage. Fifth is channeling, in accordance with which non-virtuous motives must be shaped and directed so that they give rise to the same behavior as virtue would require. Next, inculcation: through law in the broadest sense, government must teach virtue directly. And finally, subsidiarity, which requires that government honor virtue and protect its teachers without attempting to take their place.

By reason of our many follies, we may at last have reached that point in history where these solutions can be judged.

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Consider deterrence, that acts of vice must be inhibited by the threat of legal punishment. Even this simplest and most straightforward of the seven solutions is sometimes misunderstood, so let us begin by making sure just what it does and does not propose. In the first place, its target is not vice proper, but only the *acts* of vice. For the very good reason that vice is an invisible disposition of the heart that cannot be detected by the authorities, we do not punish folly, injustice, or intemperance as such, but rather, say, the foolish act of selling liquor to a six-year-old, the unjust act of taking a bribe, and the intemperate act of having a drunken orgy in a public place. Second, because the purpose of law is the common rather than the personal good, not even every act of vice is a fitting concern of law; to make it so there must be significant injury to the rest of the public. In practice this is less a limit than it seems, for once we consider indirect harms, like the harm of bad example or the harm of reducing one's ability to fulfill one's duties, we realize that there may be no such thing as an act of vice that does *no* public injury. Nevertheless it is a limit, for not all injury is significant injury.

Now, how effective is this solution? Not very. In the first place, deterrence, supposedly our answer to depravity, is crippled by depravity itself; it works well only when depravity is incomplete. For as lawbreakers in and out of government know full well, only a fraction of crimes are punished. True, the fraction may be enlarged by such means as putting more policemen on the streets and auditors in the Treasury Department. Beyond a certain point, however, the cost of enlarging it becomes too high—and the more reprobate the population, the sooner this point is reached. Thus law achieves most of its deterrent effect not by exploiting fear, but by exploiting guilt. It presupposes not the total absence of moral qualities among the citizens, but only their imperfection. It shores up a faltering conscience, but this presupposes conscience. Further, punishments must be in keeping with the stage of development that conscience has already reached. To be sure, Thomas Aquinas held that punishments can instruct the conscience as well as employ it—a thesis we will consider later. But even he conceded that punishments can neither instruct nor deter if they get too far ahead of the point that conscience has already reached. As the debacle of Prohibition confirms, the attempt to suppress those acts of vice which the citizens still love and find blameless merely makes them "break out into yet greater evils."

Not only must law achieve most of its deterrent effect not by exploiting fear but by exploiting the residue of virtue; the guardians themselves must have an even purer heart than those they guard. This is a hard demand, even harder in the marble corridors than on the streets. It is one thing asking policemen not to murder or take bribes, quite another asking lawmakers to abstain from partiality. As Hume observed, men act less virtuously in their public capacities than in their private. Several explanations can be offered for this. One is that few virtuous men have the stomach to campaign; another, that great temptations bring out hidden faults; still another, that personal responsibility is easier to evade when individuals act in concert. Hume's own explanation is more subtle. What steers most men toward the common good, he says, is merely the desire for honor, which is not a craving for goodness as such but for the good opinion of others. Unfortunately, whereas in private life a man may crave the good opinion of everyone, in politics he craves it only of his confederates; hence the common good becomes, for him, the good that is common to party. True, some few do keep their hearts pure even in the sewer of faction. But because the policy of a group is determined by its majority, these few count for nothing. Groups are not kind to exceptions.

We see then that deterrence is not a true solution to the problem of the scarcity of virtue, for the scarcer the virtue, the weaker the deterrent. At best, deterrence is a kind of Hamburger Helper. It helps government go a little further toward the common good with what little virtue we have; it cannot enable it to do without.

As for filtration, the idea that officeholders must be recruited disproportionately from among the most virtuous: in this solution to the problem, no pretense is made that we can do without virtue; filtration is an open strategy for getting more from the little bit there is. If power waters all the seeds of vice, all the more important that those in power are not too seedy at the outset. Political history knows of just four filtration strategies.

There is ascription, that candidates must have particular characteristics which are supposedly correlated with merit but cannot be attained by any voluntary action. The ascriptive characteristic of lineage was the basis on which Aristotle distinguished virtuous aristocracy from its perversion, oligarchy. Both, of course, made rule the affair of an elite, but whereas in aristocracy the Few are set apart by noble breeding, in oligarchy they are merely filthy rich. Several ascriptive filters are also specified by the American Constitution; for instance, the President must be a natural-born citizen, and Senators must be at least thirty years of age.

Another strategy is that of achievement. Not only did every senator in Republican Rome come from a magisterial lineage—by itself, an ascriptive requirement—but each had also personally ascended the *cursus honorum*, holding in turn every one of the prescribed magisterial offices from lowest to highest. Although the analogy is perhaps not to be pressed too strongly, some Americans view the system of presidential primaries in a similar light: not, to be sure, as

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a ladder of honors, but as a gamut of obstacles.

Then there is filtration by examination, in which candidates must perform well on a formal test of knowledge or belief. Mandarin bureaucrats demonstrated erudition in the works of the sages. Although the United States Constitution forbids using religion as an examination filter, we too require a civil service exam. While the Mandarin exam may have been viewed as the best filter possible, the American exam is viewed merely as an improvement upon patronage.

Finally, there is approbation, that is, candidates must demonstrate their merit to those deemed qualified to judge it. Madison expected citizens to vote according to their estimates of the candidates' virtue. The key assumption here is as old as Plato's *Laws:* that when undistracted by bribes, ordinary people are both able to identify and willing to defer to persons of greater virtue than themselves. Of course, Madison does not assume that every kind of merit can be judged by inexperienced people. For the kinds that cannot, he simply adds more layers to the filter.

Are we better off with a filter than without? Sometimes, but not always. Consider some of the ways in which filters can backfire.

The whole point of a filter is, of course, to magnify some difference between ruled and rulers. But any difference between the ranks may whet the tooth of envy. This is especially true with a difference in virtue—whether it is real or only shammed. A virtue filter that awakens envy is like a winnowing basket that separates the chaff by destroying the grain.

Ambition gives rise to another possible backfire. The wise, said Plato, must be forced to rule. What does this say about those who *want* to? Walter Mondale has said that to run the gauntlet of presidential primaries, one must have "fire in the belly." Does he mean persistence, endurance, and adaptability? Or does he mean the love of power and the lust of domination?

Then there are the wise fools. Examination filters presuppose that learning is correlated with wisdom. True, moral discernment without any propositional knowledge at all is clearly impossible. In modern, relativistic education, on the other hand, the more someone learns the less discerning he becomes.

And there is the race of technique. Every advance in the technique of filtration calls forth an advance in the technique of evasion. Consider the electoral filter. *Leak*: Voters can be bribed. *Patch*: Make electoral districts large. As Madison suggested, the greater the number of voters who have to be bought all at once, the more expensive it is "for unworthy candidates to practice with success the vicious arts by which elections are too often carried." *New leak*: Unable to finance these vicious arts themselves, candidates seek the assistance of large-scale political organizations.

Last, there is the vesting of interests. The steps we have taken to keep patronage out of government hiring make it hard to control bureaucrats, and the steps we have taken to keep it out of firing make it hard to dismiss them for incompetence. Indeed, a permanent, nonpartisan civil service, protected by law and largely unionized, naturally reinterprets the virtues of professionalism in terms of survival, growth, and expansion of mission.

Filtration's inherent problems help us to understand the pendulum quality of some of our reforms. Consider the Progressive Era replacement of partisan caucuses by partisan primaries. This merely reflects a preference for the approbation of followers over the approbation of bosses. In view of the swelling lunacy of electronic politics, the old smoke-filled room is looking better and better.

In the case of compensation, that is, that citizens must be organized in such a way that excess and deficiency correct each other, and all the scattered chips of insight come together in a whole: wherever there are differences, there must be coordination. To be sure, not all difference in temperament is due to vice, nor all difference in insight to folly. But each sort of difference requires its own sort of coordination. Francis and Benedict must be coordinated because they develop virtue in different ways; Laurel and Hardy, because they bungle it in different ways. Whereas gifts must be arranged to unfold each other, flaws must be arranged to offset each other.

Suppose we were to follow Aristotle and St. Thomas in distinguishing between rectitude of judgment and rectitude of passion (leaving rectitude of will for later). Each kind of rectitude is lost in a different way: rectitude of judgment by seeing only part of the picture, rectitude of passion through excess or deficiency, as in rashness and cowardice.

For each kind of deviation from rectitude there is also a different method of compensation. The compensation for defects of judgment is composing insights. At a certain point in Aristotle's *Politics*, he sets the Many and the Few in an imaginary conversation about who has the best claim to rule. The aristocrats claim rule on grounds of superior wisdom, for they have both experience and erudition. The commoners concede inferiority man to man, but deny it in the group. The reason? The assembly collects perspectives as well as people; through the taking of counsel, fragmentary insights are composed into a rounded picture of the whole.

Was it true? In Aristotle's day, assemblies were often hard to tell from mobs. Today's representative legislatures are much less turbulent, but no more given to deliberation. Political scientists find that more is explained by the "aggregation of preferences" than the composition of insights. In fact, on most issues Congressmen are too hyperspecialized even to have preferences. Instead of taking counsel, they take cues from colleagues whose hyperspecialties are different. That would be all right if wisdom could be entirely reduced to technical expertise, but

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as Socrates taught, it cannot. The reason counsel is so rarely taken is that it is so demanding. In order for people to compose their scattered and one-sided insights, they must take counsel with firmness, fairness, coolness, discretion, and restraint. Most of all they must crave truth more than victory.

The compensation for defects of passion might be called weaving. The metaphor comes from Plato's dialogue *Statesman*, where the true man of state is portrayed as a weaver of opposite civic temperaments. The rash and the timid become the warp and woof of an intricate pattern in the fabric of the community. Plato is speaking not of composing fragmentary insights, but of tempering extremes of passion. Fear tempers fire, fire fear.

Weaving is an almost impossible discipline. Mix salty with bland and you get mulligatawny, but mix hawks with doves and you get mayhem. Now and then you may get a dove-hawk hybrid, but that is not much better, for though the mean and the midpoint are the same in arithmetic, they are different in policy: we should sometimes act and sometimes wait, sometimes spend and sometimes save, sometimes fight and sometimes flee. Therefore the weaving would also have to change with circumstance. It seems, then, that in order to weave successfully, the statesman himself must have virtue entire. To know how to manage souls he must be wise, just, moderate, and courageous himself.

In the end we see yet another application of the Hamburger Helper principle. Compensation does not replace virtue; it only extends its range. The taking of counsel composes insights only among those who have some virtue already. Weaving demands less virtue from the ruled, but even more from the rulers.

What of balance—that selfish groups be set against each other so that vice is checked and virtue given leverage? Achieving balance between opposing groups has generally been thought to involve three different tasks. First, the constitutional advantages of each group must be made as nearly equal as possible. Second, straddling every important cleavage, a middle or third group must be made as secure as possible. Third, incentives for opposing groups to court this middle must be established and strengthened.

Examples are easily compiled. The Few and the Many might be balanced by a middle class (Aristotle's theory), a monarch (the "literary" theory of England), an elected chief magistrate (John Adams' theory), or a college of magistrates (the "literary" theory of Rome). In similar fashion, opposing parties might be balanced by independent voters, opposing coalitions might be balanced by independent parties, a parliament and cabinet might be balanced by independent members, and so on.

Does balance solve The Problem? One criticism, at least, is groundless—that balance causes "gridlock," institutionalizing a bias in favor of an unjust status quo. This charge overlooks the role of the middle. As the English Reform Acts demonstrated, competition between the extremes in the presence of a middle can even supply a motive to make the middle bigger, to enfranchise portions of the population that have previously been excluded from full political rights.

Other charges against the strategy of constitutional balance are harder to dismiss. The classical version of the strategy of balance told a story of the Many, the Few, and the Middle. Conflict more often occurs between different factions of the few, variously allied with the middle and variously mediated by the sullenness or compliance of the many. The lower orders have less protection than the classical strategy supposes. Furthermore, those who devise schemes to balance opposing groups are apt to be involved in the conflict themselves. Beyond this, any device that can be used to weaken the strong and strengthen the weak, as balance requires, can also be used to strengthen the strong and weaken the weak. If the social positions of the groups to be balanced are grossly unequal, the middle group may even be exploited by the Few as a buffer *against* the Many—a scapegoat. In addition, balanced government is complicated government. The more complicated the government, the more difficult to know whom to blame when something goes wrong. And no matter how well groups are balanced, changes in their behavior over time are likely to knock them out of balance again. For instance the legislature, at first factious, wild, and impulsive, may later settle down, while judges, at first modest and steady, may become capricious and arrogant.

Coalitions *against* the middle do occasionally occur. The Roman senatorial elite was sometimes able to gain the support of the urban rabble for laws that hurt the middle class, and in America, incumbents of opposite parties, out to increase their own advantage, find common cause against challengers.

There are such things as unbalanceable groups. Although there may be none that cannot be taken into a constitutional scheme of balances, there are some that should not be. The Church, for instance, ought not to be made a "second estate"; it is "a colony of heaven," not a province of this world. Besides this, just as there are some groups that should not be taken into a constitutional scheme of balance, so there are some issues that should not be resolved by compromise. For instance, the middle cannot be right about abortion, because killing the child is either murderous or not.

In any case, whatever device we use to even the scales between opposing groups is likely to generate a new opposition that is itself in need of balancing. Suppose we were to even up the rulers and the ruled by dividing the former into "branches." Horizontal collusion would become less important, but vertical

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collusion would become more. Thus in the United States, each interest group has its own little chunk of the civil service and the legislature.

In addition, certain policies disturb the constitutional balance even though they contradict no constitutional rule. The classical example of a constitutional sleeper is the Roman policy of imperialism, which indirectly made free farming unprofitable on the Italian peninsula and thereby destroyed the landed middle class. For future historians, the classical example of a constitutional sleeper might be the welfare state.

Finally, who really gains from what is often difficult to tell. For instance, a landed elite may like nothing better than to make the franchise universal, for tenants will probably accept direction from those on whom they are dependent. The real loser here is the middle class.

Considering these flaws, balance might still give us a little better than the government we deserve, but it cannot plausibly give us justice and good order in the complete absence of virtue. The most penetrating theorists of balance have understood this. Aristotle seemed to conceive the opposition of selfish groups not so much in terms of checking vice, as in terms of giving leverage to the otherwise voiceless group cast in the role of balancer. In his ideal case, the balancing group is really virtuous; all of the swing votes are held by "a few good men and true." In his second-best case, the balancer does not have virtue, but imitates it; all of the swing votes are held by members of the middle class, who are far from being saints yet have none of the usual motives for injustice. They are neither so rich that they can exploit their neighbors, nor so poor that they have nothing to lose by revolution.

Next in our order of strategies comes channeling—in which non-virtuous motives must be shaped and directed so that they give rise to the same behavior to which virtue would give rise. We have without noticing considered an instance of channeling already. Remember that according to Aristotle the middle class is well cast to balance the Few against the Many not because it truly has virtue, but because it imitates it: its middling position shapes and directs its desire for security in just such fashion that it avoids both extremes of injustice.

For Aristotle, channeling is part of a broader strategy of balance. However, channeling can also work by itself. Desire for independence, for example, is no more a virtue than desire for security, but it can imitate a virtue well enough to have fooled both Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton. Hence Hamilton, who found the desire for independence in business, pinned his political hopes on the leadership of gentlemen, whereas Jefferson, who found it in farming, pinned his on the sons of earth. From either point to policy is but a single step: for Jefferson commerce is anathema, while for Hamilton it is a republican necessity.

In principle almost any motive might be the object of channeling. In our century, disastrous attempts have been made to put even envy, fear, and hatred into harness for the good. Republics, however, exploit a different set of motives. Our keenest republican theories of channeling can be credited to Augustine, Adam Smith, and Alexis de Tocqueville. Reflecting on the history of Rome, Augustine explained how the love of glory could prompt seemingly public-spirited deeds by keeping yet worse motives in check. Smith and Tocqueville developed similar analyses of the love of wealth. What makes these thinkers so acute is their recognition that successful channeling has both institutional and moral requirements. For the Augustinian strategy, the institutional requirements include, first, a society of fixed statuses, for only a nobility is interested in glory; second, an arena of competition, for otherwise the glory motive would be given no direction. Smith and Tocqueville require a society *without* fixed statuses, for only under a regime of insecurity are people sufficiently interested in gain. On the other hand, they too require an arena of competition, otherwise the gain motive would be similarly undirected.

The moral requirements are more interesting because they show that channeling is yet another Hamburger Helper strategy, like deterrence, filtration, compensation, and balance. Rather than offering a substitute for virtue, it seems, by a Faustian bargain, to make a little bit go further. Augustinian nobles must have not only a desire for glory but a sense of what truly merits it; Smithian entrepreneurs, not only a desire for gain but a sense of restraint; and Tocquevillian citizens, not only self-interest but "self-interest rightly understood." Otherwise, nobles are just as apt to seek fame by fraudulent means as by fair, following Machiavelli's advice that if they cannot be entirely good, they should be entirely evil. Otherwise, businessmen are just as apt to collude as to compete, following mercantilist advice to seek tariffs, privileges, and monopolies. Otherwise, citizens are just as apt to seek license as liberty, following demagogic advice to step on the faces of their fellows in order to rise.

Only Augustine, however, perceived the paradox that channeling entails. Channeling doesn't just manipulate the subvirtuous motives with which it deals; it *accommodates* them. This is like promising an alcoholic a drink for staying sober. For a while, then—a few centuries in the most successful cases—channeling seems to work. But in the long run it undermines that little bit of virtue that it seems to stretch; it saws off the limb that it is sitting on. Hence between the channeling of gain and glory and the channeling of fear and envy there may be less difference than we think. Sallust and Cicero, who do not know the difference between a virtue and its imitation, are at a loss to understand why *gloria* was supplanted by *cu-*

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piditas and *ambitio* in Rome. Not Augustine; he knows. Do we?

Inculcation: Through law in the broadest sense, government must teach virtue directly. All of our substitutes for virtue have turned out to be merely unreliable ways to extend its range. Shall we use law in the broadest sense—not only its essential acts, commanding, permitting, and prohibiting, but also their modalities, such as honoring and dishonoring, encouraging and discouraging, protecting and attacking, helping and hindering, declaring and denying, giving and taking, educating and administering—to make men good?

We know at least that the law cannot be neutral. Everything a government does is founded on some understanding of what is good. Moreover, no law that has effect at all can fail to have effect on character. On the other hand, granted that the law must take an interest in whether men are becoming worse or better, it does not follow that it must *make* men better. Perhaps it is a poor teacher, other teachers are better, and it only hinders them when it tries to do their job. The position maintained here is threefold: it is, they are, and it does. Thus a fitter set of maxims than "Make men better" is "Protect the true teachers of virtue; get out of their way; and be sure not to make men worse." The true teachers are church and family.

The state should defer to church and family partly because of its own nature. Though government exists for the common good, it is the target of partisan interests. Capture by these interests is just as easy when it tries to teach as when it tries to tax. Consider, for example, the present struggle over whether sodomy is to be legitimized as a way of life. As both armies engaged in the struggle understand, this war concerns the distribution not only of privileges but of esteem: rules concerning adoption, employment, housing, and health are just as "educational" as rules concerning what is to be taught in the public schools.

Now despite the risk of partisan capture, the government *must* do what no one else can do. But others do raise children and minister to souls. The family is not subject to partisan capture at all; normal parents love their children as no politician can, and they do not stand for election. The visible church is subject to capture, but unlike the government, it is purely voluntary.

The state should also defer to church and family because of the nature of moral development. We often speak as though becoming good were an arithmetic process of adding good qualities and subtracting bad ones, so that the greater the sum, the better we get, and we can get just as good as we please. But this picture is false to human experience. For three reasons.

One reason is the Paradox of Treacherous Good: bad qualities always depend on imperfectly good ones for their vigor; the more of the good ones we have, the more harm we can do with the bad ones. We all know that patience and caution are good qualities; but unless we are speaking of that perfected patience which awaits only good and of that perfected caution which fears only evil, then these qualities may serve knaves as well as honest men. A man must be not only taught and trained, but *turned around.* He must repent.

Another reason is the Paradox of Elevation: because we imitate virtue by channeling vices, apparent improvement in a single moral dimension can mask the fact that in the long run one is getting worse in all of them. A climber may be going in the wrong direction even though the ground is rising on the path he walks. Consider pride in its nobler forms. It may demand obsequies—but at least it never offers them. It may step on unrelated inferiors—but it is generous to its dependents. It may make evil vows—but, whatever its vows, it keeps them. Eventually it poisons the springs of all the virtues—but, most glorious of banes, on its tainted way it achieves some mighty splendors. A man must be not only turned around, but turned in the *right direction.* He needs the word of God.

The third reason is the Paradox of Countervailing Vice: the cure of a channeled vice may open the door to others that are even worse. We have seen the Hoover Dams of channeling already. Vice dons virtue in smaller ways as well; for instance, the need to condescend, or the urge to atone, may ape compassion for the weak and misused. Unfortunately, if weeds and wheat are matted together, a yank on one may uproot the other. Chide glory, and the nobility grow slothful. Curb materialism, and the merchants grow indolent. Cure condescension and displacement of guilt, and the compassionators grow indifferent. A man must be not only turned around and guided, but *transformed.* He needs God's Grace.

Repentance, revelation, and grace are far beyond the scope of law. That is the doom of official inculcation.

Subsidiarity: that government must honor virtue and protect its teachers without attempting to take their place. In escaping inculcation we have tumbled into subsidiarity; the same arguments that push us out of the one have pulled us into the other. But we must be careful not to misunderstand where we have gotten. In the first place, the fact that subsidiarity is opposed to inculcation in no way makes it neutral. A state that defers to parents and church has not thereby suspended judgment; it has agreed with them that their jobs are not its own. A state that forgoes inculcation has not thereby denied its own influence on character; it has agreed that it ought not put this influence in competition with that of parents and church. A state that lays down its pretension to make men good has not thereby abandoned concern for their goodness; it has merely removed the

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chief cause of its making them worse. Subsidiarity means confirming good qualities taught elsewhere—instead of, for instance, tearing them up and replacing them with supposed others.

The second point we must be careful not to misunderstand is what it means to "protect" the family and the church—what it means for the state to be a *subsidium*. Concerning the family, G. K. Chesterton put the problem well in *The Well and the Shadows*. What he disliked most, he said,

> is not the Communist attacking the family or the Capitalist betraying the family; it is the vast and very astonishing vision of the Hitlerite defending the family. Hitler's way of defending the independence of the family is to make every family dependent on him and his semi-Socialist State; and to preserve the authority of parents by authoritatively telling all the parents what to do. . . . In other words, he appears to interfere with family life more even than the Bolshevists do; and to do it in the name of the sacredness of the family.

But this sort of thing does not require death camps or wars of conquest; it gets along better without them. All it needs is the quiet crushing kindness of the welfare state. Government first taxes away the family income, then "helps" the families thereby enfeebled by giving back part of the income in the form of "benefits" and regulations that further reduce their independence and vitality. Schools, for instance, are "free," but parents cannot choose their children's teachers or control what their children will be taught. "When they come through that door," said an education despot in the seat of government, "they're mine."

The point we are making concerns the church as well. Not only does the modern state interfere with family in the name of family, it interferes with faith in the name of faith. Whenever it is not scolding the church in fear of her challenge, it is whispering to her in hopes of making her pregnant with its purposes. So intent on seducing the Bride of Christ is the current President that during his candidacy he tried to imitate her Husband's voice. Identifying himself with the Redeemer, he called his program the New Covenant, then misquoted Scripture to support it. "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has imagined what we can build," he prophesied at his convention. The way this runs in Scripture itself is, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9, NIV, quoting Isaiah 64:4.) The biblical passage gives sovereignty to God. Although the President's language still sounds biblical, it gives sovereignty to Man.

Subsidiarity, then, does not mean that the state flatters, seduces, or absorbs the true teachers of virtue. It means getting out of their way, and keeping other things from getting in their way. The state gets out of the way not by raising taxes and putting all mothers on the dole, but by reducing taxes so that they do not have to work; not by making sex a compulsory subject in the schools, but by letting families choose their own schools; not by keeping children from ever hearing a public prayer, but by keeping them from ever hearing a public obscenity; not by calling for a "politics of meaning," but by honoring that Meaning which no politics made, that Glory which even the heavens, though soulless, declare.

Is subsidiarity, then, a solution to The Problem? No. But until the world is remade, we can probably do no better. FT

Puzzle: Tuolumne River

Just now, a yellow leaf the shape of an eye
flies, settles on the glacial rock.

Every hour a new riddle shows up, a clue
that contradicts yesterday's logic: the wedlock

of moss with pine root; the way water, in its
softness, has knuckled holes in its granite

partner; the chill olive of shadow vs. the sun's
burn off the ripples; the cascade's cursive eloquence

that drowns your voice; skeptic living
with optimist. And now, this watchful yellow leaf.

Luci Shaw

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Learning from Sartre

John T. Mullen

Jean-Paul Sartre is not, to put it mildly, very high on the reading list of those seeking to grow in Christian piety. Indeed, most would express mild shock at the suggestion that his writings could ever make such a list. His atheism would unsettle the tremulous soul, his contradictions would both confuse and infuriate the logical, and his unrestrained verbosity would bore everybody. Yet, while it is true that the greater part of his work is a terrible wasteland, curiously enough, there is a particular element in his thought that is valuable to believers—and in an area where help is greatly needed. This need is one that often goes unperceived by Christian writers, who, ironically, have let it fall to an unwitting atheist to address in depth. Allow me to explain.

Anyone who has ever seriously committed himself to following Christ and conforming to His character quickly discovers how difficult it is to do. There are hindrances everywhere, but the greatest of these is the sin within the disciple himself. Indeed, the motivation for following Christ in the first place is to be rid, eventually, of the sin that destroys life and offends God. Hence we are exhorted to turn from our sin, which we do by ceasing from various activities that we know to be sinful and by undertaking others that we know to be good. So far so good, but there remains a nagging uneasiness. Our behavior may be better, but how much real growth in holiness has taken place? The feeling that we have only scratched the surface of this problem creates a deep desire to get to the bottom of our sin, to start attacking it at its very core. But how? What exactly is the very core of sin? If we knew this, we would certainly be better equipped for the attack.

Christian theologians have often addressed this question. The most notable example is Augustine's description of his stealing pears in his youth, a passage that has long been widely read in the Western world. Augustine was struck that it was the very forbiddenness of the act that caused him to take such delight in it; the pears themselves were no attraction at all. His analysis is a chilling anticipation of Sartre:

> So all men who put themselves far from [God] and set themselves up against [Him], are in fact attempting awkwardly to be like [Him]. And even in this imitating of [Him] they declare [Him] to be the creator of everything in existence and that consequently there can be no place in which one can in any way withdraw oneself from [Him]. . . . And was I thus, though a prisoner, making a show of a kind of truncated liberty, doing unpunished what I was not allowed to do and so producing a darkened image of omnipotence?

Augustine realized that the essence of sin is to place oneself in God's rightful place, to attempt to be like Him in ways impossible for one of His creatures. Usually, such attempts involve a denial of God's authority to command His creatures and to set limits on their behavior. Sometimes, *all* creaturely limitations are thrown off. Sartre, as we shall see, took the latter approach.

If the true nature of sin has been identified for so long, it might be asked, what can an atheist like Sartre possibly contribute to our understanding of it? His "contribution" consists in turning the very essence of sin into the foundation of a philosophical system. He concedes as much when he tells us that "Existentialism is nothing else than an attempt to draw the full conclusions from a consistently atheistic position." Or again, "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. That is the first principle of existentialism." As he develops his thought, we begin to see how sin has infected us in ways we are not even

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conscious of. This is handy information for anyone whose highest desire is to turn away from sin, and it keeps one focused on what sin really is. Sartre is, of course, perfectly oblivious to this assistance he is providing for the Christian church.

The cornerstone of his philosophy is the sovereignty of human freedom. He is quite frank about what he means by freedom. For Sartre, freedom is nothing less than the power to define one's own being, to determine what one *is*. Anything outside oneself that exerts any influence over one's being is by definition an obstacle to freedom. He explains: "It is therefore senseless to think of complaining since nothing foreign has decided what we feel, what we live, or what we are. Furthermore this absolute responsibility is not resignation: it is simply the logical requirement of the consequences of our freedom."

This leads Sartre to distinguish between being-in-itself, which lacks freedom and cannot choose what it will be, and being-for-itself, which is continuously determining itself and hence has no fixed essence of its own. Man, says Sartre, is the latter: "There is no human nature, since there is no God to have a conception of it." This means that Man is in a constant process of becoming what he now is not. Since Sartre cannot say that Man ever *is* anything at any particular time, he equates Man's being-for-itself with nothingness. It is amusing to note that those who begin by assuming the sovereignty of human freedom must go on to conclude that they are as nothing. But it is more important to note that Sartre's assumption is arbitrary. It is the starting point for his speculations, for which no defense is ever given.

The obvious objection at this point is that if Man always possesses such absolute existential freedom there should be no need to speak of obstacles to freedom. For, on the one hand, Sartre tells us "Man is condemned to be free," which implies that it is not possible to lose our freedom. Yet on the other hand he is forever lamenting Man's inability to overcome the things that deny him his freedom, such as his past, his surroundings, other people (more on this later), and especially death. This is precisely why Sartre uses the word "condemned." He is really saying that we must forever struggle to retain a freedom that we can never lose.

But no one should expect consistency to arise from atheism. What is remarkable is the unrestrained usurpation of divine attributes that constitutes Sartre's view of human freedom. S. U. Zuidema summarizes Sartre's position:

> In fact this amounts to the self's "dis-realization" of its own contingency, and the incorporation of "reality" into the realm of the sovereign self; . . . to the actualization and realization of man's lordship and form-creating power over reality; to the cultural duty of man, in which he puts reality at his own service, takes possession of reality, incorporates it, governs it, rules it, makes himself its undisputed master.

This is pure sin, if these two words may be put together without contradiction or blasphemy. Most people who hold a similar position look for a way to talk around it to make it appear less rebellious. But Sartre doesn't mind coming right out and telling us that he wants to rule the world: "The best way to conceive of the fundamental project of human reality is to say that man is the being whose project is to be God. . . . [M]an fundamentally is the desire to be God." This is rather refreshing, in a convoluted way. It is a perfect articulation of Augustine's "darkened image of omnipotence." We don't have to guess what he's up to. But why, one might ask, shouldn't we at this point just lay Sartre aside and pick up the Sunday comics? The answer is, because he goes on to analyze how the desire for omnipotence is manifested in life, and his analysis is important for anyone willing to acknowledge that this desire to be God still dwells within. It serves as a catalog of the symptoms one may expect to find whenever this disease breaks out.

Sartre also wrote of a third category of being, the being-for-other. This may seem at first glance to be an improvement over the other two, since it seems to say that Man has some purpose outside himself. But in Sartre's world, being-for-other is a catastrophe. Sartre, remember, thinks he is omnipotent. The last thing such a person wants to be confronted with is something he has no control over, i.e., incontrovertible evidence of his own non-omnipotence. Sartre is never directly confronted with God, so he gets away with denying Him (for a while), but other people are all around him, and each one possesses his or her own sovereign freedom in competition with Sartre's. Intolerable! He becomes aware of other people when they look at him (though it is difficult to believe he is unaware of them otherwise). In any case, it is the glance of the other that so disturbs the delusion of omnipotence. Sartre is for himself pure subject; but the glance turns him into the object of another's subjectivity, and so robs him of his delusion. He now exists for another, and sovereignly free beings just cannot live this way. Sartre cries out in his distress:

> With the Other's look the "situation" escapes me. To use an everyday expression which better expresses our thought, I *am no longer master of my situation*. . . . The appearance of the Other, on the contrary, causes the appearance in the situation of an aspect which I did not wish, of which I am not master, and which on principle escapes me since it is *for the other*.

What can be done about this? Stare back, of course, until one party wins the battle and becomes pure sub-

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ject, while the loser becomes pure object. In Sartre's own words, "the objectivation of the Other . . . is a defense on the part of my being which, precisely by conferring on the other a being for-me, frees me from my being-for the Other." Though Sartre describes this action as a defense, it is really more of a counteroffensive. Zuidema gives another astute summary:

> This all means, then, that the "world," including the world within myself, is a battlefield, on which the continual struggle between myself and everyone else is fought out. It is a struggle for unending mastery over this world.

This is the sort of thinking that prompted Sartre's famous quip, in his play *No Exit*, that "Hell is other people."

The silliness of this analysis is easy to expose and ridicule, but it must be remembered that this constant struggle actually goes on, all over the world, all the time (not in the form of a staring game, of course, but as the clash of conflicting desires). It is the inevitable result of sin, and sin is everywhere. It even serves as its own provisional judgment, alerting us all to the folly of our desire for control. Sartre was saying more than he knew when he said we are *condemned* to freedom. If we rightly recognize how silly Sartre's analysis is, we also ought to recognize how accurately it identifies the root of all our own foolish and destructive behavior.

Sartre is also vaguely aware of the connection his philosophy has with sin, though his atheism precludes his holding any real concept of sin. He speaks of the feeling of shame as the immediate consequence of the other's glance. He writes, "Shame . . . is the *recognition* of the fact that I *am* indeed that object which the Other is looking at and judging. I can be ashamed only as my freedom escapes me in order to become a *given* object." Now shame figures prominently in Scripture as the immediate consequence of sin (Genesis 2:25, 3:7). The two are indeed connected, but Sartre cannot make the connection between his own view of others and sin. Marjorie Grene explains his view:

> It is the transformation of myself from free agent shaping my own world to body seen by another that is the source of shame. Hence Sartre's explanation . . . of original sin: it is the revelation of my body as a mere body that makes me ashamed; and that shame is at the root of the sense of sin.

Indeed, the revelation of the body is nakedness, and Scripture agrees that consciousness of nakedness was the original source of shame. If we didn't know better, we might say Sartre is trying to point us to the Bible, and he is not unaware of this odd agreement himself, for he writes:

> Modesty and in particular the fear of being surprised in a state of nakedness are only a symbolic specification of original shame; the body symbolizes here our defenseless state as objects. To put on clothes is to hide one's object-state; it is to claim the right of seeing without being seen; that is, to be pure subject. This is why the biblical symbol of the fall after the original sin is the fact that Adam and Eve "know that they are naked." The reaction to shame will consist exactly in apprehending as an object the one who apprehended *my* own object state.

But Sartre is merely trying to account for the feeling of shame after having assumed that there is no real sin on which it might have been based. This is why he speaks only of a "sense" of sin. He seeks a cause elsewhere, and he thinks he has found it in the assault on his freedom. As Grene explains, "the existence of an onlooker implies shame. Fear and shame are, for [Sartre], the two proper and immediate reactions to the intrusion of another person into my world."

But rather than explaining shame, Sartre has explained it *away*. What is lacking in his argument is an adequate accounting for the sense of *culpability* that is essential to shame. A mere intrusion would only produce annoyance and a sense of mission: we must eliminate the intruder. When we are intruded upon, we do not feel ourselves to be culpable. But shame is not shame without just such a sense of culpability.

Sartre tries to deflect this objection by assuming that we do not feel shame until we are observed. He accepts it as a universal that "anyone may recognize . . . that immediate and burning presence of the Other's look which has so often filled him with shame." The implication is that solitary people know no shame. Wilfrid Desan explains: "The meaning of culpability arises through the Other: would culpability ever make sense without the existence of the Other? Is it not before the Other that I feel my abjectness, my nakedness?" The idea of culpability presupposes the existence of an "other" (i.e., a watcher), hence the "other," according to Sartre, must be the *cause* of the shame. Now, it may be conceded that an *absolutely* solitary person cannot know shame. If I were the only person in the entire universe (as Sartre would like to be), it would be impossible for shame ever to arise in me. This proves that an observer is *necessary* for shame. But not that an observer is *sufficient* for shame. It is possible to be observed shamelessly. The glance of the Other will not generate shame unless it falls upon some sin that exists objectively within the shamed one. This is a perfect example of the false cause fallacy.

Furthermore, Sartre's "observation" that shame implies an observer may be used against him. The only thing we must assume is that human beings can

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feel shame even when alone. Most people have had this experience, and would therefore not hesitate to grant our assumption. But who is the observer in such cases? He can only be the God Sartre denies. Yet his denial is also a concession: "God," he says, "is only the concept of the Other pushed to the limit." If Sartre were to admit that he even once experienced solitary shame, then his own philosophy would require him to become a theist. This might even constitute a new "proof" for the existence of God: the "proof from solitary shame," perhaps? And we would owe it all to Jean-Paul Sartre.

Mostly, however, we owe Sartre for exposing the dreadfully absurd consequences of denying God by setting ourselves in His place. Sartre ends with an echo of the life lived apart from God as described in the book of Ecclesiastes. Desan summarizes:

> The For-itself is a failure in its conquest of the world: it will never be what it wants to be, the For-itself-in-itself: i.e., God. "Human being is useless passion . . . and to intoxicate yourself alone in a bar or to conduct the nations is equally vain."

The latter paraphrase is Sartre's own conclusion to his *Being and Nothingness,* where most of the foregoing rebellion is laid out. This world of vanity and endless conflict that results from Sartre's failed quest for sovereign freedom, however, is necessary only for those who insist upon embarking on it. Sad to say, this includes all of us. We can see reflections of Sartre's quest in our own conflicts. They are all due to our own, or someone else's, desire to rule the world. Yet understanding this gets us below the surface of our sinful behavior to that sinful core which so often haunts and disturbs us. The deepest repentance must include the acknowledgment of creaturely limitations and the acceptance of divinely appointed limits. Sartre has done us the favor of showing us how our refusal to accept our limits is the root of our tendency to treat others as objects and to hate others for the ways in which they limit us.

In our relations with others, a simple acknowledgment that the "other" has been created as a subject along with us will prevent us from seeking to squash his subjectivity beneath our own. And neither should the thought of being an object cause such distress. It simply goes along with creatureliness. Others will necessarily incorporate us into their view of the world, but it is understood that, as creatures themselves, their view will be incomplete. It is only God's view that need concern us, and for those who know that His glance comes with forgiveness and healing, all of Sartre's terrors are reduced to nonsense.

Augustine concluded his analysis of his own depravity with the following expression of revulsion. It should be read with Sartre's futile quest in mind:

> Who can disentangle this most twisted and most inextricable knottiness? It is revolting: I hate to think of it; I hate to look at it. . . . I slipped from you and went astray, my God, in my youth, wandering too far from my upholder and my stay, and I became to myself a wasteland.

Ironically, those who, unlike Sartre, share Augustine's revulsion, may look to Sartre for unwitting help in untying the knot. F1

Take-off In Atlanta

At sunset lit planes rise
    towards the bloody West.
Blinking into stars they swerve
    with grace and deference
to find perfect places
    in Heaven.

My star heads due west,
    does not lose nerve.
Winking like madness on the wing,
    I fly towards Paradise.
Masterful the melt down,
    volcanic stunt.

I will lose the race—
    have lost it.

How else to fly, but blind?

Ashley Mace Havird

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Review Essay

Culture Wars, Shooting Wars

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese

BEFORE THE SHOOTING BEGINS: SEARCHING FOR DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA'S CULTURE WAR. By JAMES DAVISON HUNTER. *Free Press. 310 pp. $22.95.*

It has become a commonplace that the state of our political culture leaves much to be desired. Complaints abound about the corruption and greed of the proverbial "interest groups," the ominous collapse of individual morality and sense of responsibility, the personal failings of politicians, and more. Disillusioned with the possibilities of making any impact upon "the system," an enormous number of Americans do not even bother to vote. And if we may credit James Davison Hunter, an increasing number of those who do vote have little substantive understanding of what they are voting about. The grasp of public issues has largely been reduced to a personal adherence to one or another of the political slogans that activists substitute for reasoned, responsible debate. By now, most people recognize that our public life seems dangerously and acrimoniously polarized, especially over cultural issues, but few seem to understand that our bitter "culture wars" may signal—whether as cause or consequence—the disintegration of our democracy.

In *Before the Shooting Begins*, Hunter returns to the same themes he so thoughtfully explored in his previous book, *Culture Wars*. Here, however, he is not primarily concerned with dissecting the specific issues that divide Americans, although he does take abortion, the most hotly contested, as a prism through which to view them. Rather, he focuses upon the reasons we hold the views we do; the relation between our views and our political practice; and the ways in which the culture wars betray the dangerous impoverishment of our political discourse and life. Contending that the discord of our public life now exceeds "mere political disagreement following the collapse of consensus over these matters," he warns that we are now living through "a war to impose consensus by virtually any political and rhetorical means possible." Tellingly, Hunter has slipped from the plural "wars" of his previous work to the ominous singular, "war," thereby suggesting that Americans are aligned on two sides of an unbridgeable divide. But even as he deplores the savagery of the war, he insists upon the significance of the issues over which it is being fought.

Hunter has no doubt that those who would dismiss cultural issues as mere epiphenomena and the struggles over them as ultimately insignificant dangerously misjudge our situation, as do those who believe our democracy to be as robust as it has ever been. To the contrary, he insists, bitterly contested cultural issues will articulate and shape our political life for the foreseeable future: "Racial conflict, gays in the military (and the rest of society), multiculturalism, textbook controversy, condom distribution to school-age children, arts funding, fetal tissue research, the tense relationship between church and state, reproduction technology, and the like all will be flash points in the coming years for this deeper conflict." The culture war embodies a bitter struggle over the "first principles of how we will order our lives together." The culture war, in other words, is about something, and the only way beyond it is through it. The culture war challenges Americans to find a way to talk seriously about serious issues, for neither facile slogans nor imposed solutions will suffice. Nor should we vainly hope for compromise: our disagreement permits no middle ground, although with heroic effort we may yet clear a terrain for difficult, mutually respectful discussion about difficult issues, which offer little prospect of compromise.

The quest for, and obstacles to, the delineation of such common terrain lies at the heart of Hunter's argument, although he explicitly discusses them primarily in the introductory and concluding sections. The main body of the book is devoted to a careful and largely convincing argument about the formidable obstacles to the establishment of the kind of robust and demanding democracy that he believes our situation requires. For as he cogently insists, our contemporary preoccupation with consensus is leading us seriously astray. Practically, consensus is unlikely to emerge from the clash of two irreconcilable moral positions. More important, consensus may fairly be viewed as the antithesis of a moral position. Moral positions, when seriously held, do not admit of compromise. Morality, by definition, requires discrimination and, indeed, authority. The prevailing American preoccupation with consensus betrays our growing tendency to rely upon procedural norms to substitute for common values and ideals.

Hunter opens *Before the Shooting Starts* with a defense of his conviction that what is at stake is nothing less than the future of American democracy, which is

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teetering on the verge of disintegration. In successive sections, he then explores the politics of distortion that is promoted by special interests, the politics of ambivalence that bedevils middle America, and the politics of failed purpose that characterizes the institutions of civil society. In conclusion, he returns to his central theme of the democratic imperative, insisting upon the futility of the quest for merely political solutions, and sketching his vision of what is required to move beyond the culture war.

Throughout, his discussion abounds with illuminating insights and refreshing good sense, not to mention rare balance and judiciousness. He has, he tells us, done his best to write from a nonpartisan position, which is to say without revealing his own preferences on specific issues. And he is remarkably successful in living up to his own standard. Some readers will admire and others rail at his ability to discuss "irreconcilable differences" with even a measure of impartiality. Many others will simply appreciate the sanity and clarity that this perspective brings to the discussion. Problems nonetheless exist, if only because Hunter's proposed solutions do not ultimately answer the fierce irreconcilability that in his view characterizes our current condition. And they do not do so in part because he falters in his diagnosis of the nature of the moral crisis through which we are living.

In discussing the politics of distortion, Hunter gives free rein to his impatience with the ways in which the most sensitive issues are trivialized and misrepresented by activists on both sides. His goal is not to charge the contending parties with deliberate lying, not least because it demonstrably does not pay in the long run. Rather, he is concerned with the kind of deliberate and deceptive overstatement—the rhetorical hyperbole—that aims to provoke an unreflective emotional response on the part of readers, listeners, or viewers. It is as if the world of reasoned argument had been reduced to the pat formulas appropriate to sound bites and bumper stickers.

Take the case of second- and third-trimester abortions. Pro-choice organizations all like to emphasize that 91 percent of all abortions take place during the first trimester, thus suggesting that the incidence of second- and third-trimester abortions is derisory. The pro-life forces, in contrast, insist that on average 160,000 second- and third-trimester abortions occur each year, which translates into more than four hundred each day of which roughly 18,000 are "unborn children at the point of viability"—that is, roughly fifty abortions of potentially viable children occur each day.

Both sides in this instance are working with the same figures, but the way in which they present them radically changes their impact. As with the numbers, so with the slogans that regularly bombard us. Obviously both sides see such distortions as mere tactics in making the best possible case for their cause. But, as Hunter points out, the conflict is not merely one of passionately held and opposing convictions. It is also one of opposing interests. At the most basic, but too frequently ignored, level the activism of both sides now provides jobs for a significant number of people. And those jobs, not to mention the public presence of an organization like Planned Parenthood, now depend upon the perpetuation of the conflict. At another level, as activists on both sides would acknowledge, virtually all American women have a direct or indirect interest in the conflict. What the activists less readily acknowledge is that men on both sides of the conflict have a direct interest as well. For many pro-choice men, the interest is their own sexual freedom. And should you doubt that they recognize the connection, ponder *Hustler*'s substantial contributions to the pro-choice cause. For pro-life men, as Hunter with welcome candor admits, the interest concerns their ability to keep women at home and, accordingly, dependent upon men.

The distortions that result from the efforts of activists, aided and abetted by the press, dramatize and simplify the issues with the clear purpose of persuading Americans to embrace one or another unambiguous position—to declare themselves for or against "choice," for or against "life." Most Americans, however, even when they do embrace one of the starkly defined alternatives, do not view the issues as unambiguous. In a chapter cowritten with Carl Bowman, Hunter draws upon his and his research assistants' extensive analysis of polls to delineate the full range of Americans' "ambivalence" about abortion. (Hunter first presented his evidence in "What Americans Really Think About Abortion," FT, June/July 1992.) Their most important conclusions are familiar to those who follow the literature about the abortion debate closely, namely, that although a majority of Americans support *Roe*, most do not know enough about the provisions of the decision to know what they are supporting and probably would not support it if they did. Most of those who support the availability of abortion only want it available during the first trimester and erroneously believe that that is what *Roe* permits. Most Americans do consider abortion a serious ethical issue, and more than 70 percent believe that, in some way, it results in the taking of life.

The most compelling complexities in Americans' views of abortion can be best appreciated if one groups them according to what Hunter and his associates call "clusters of moral opinion." Drawing upon information from a group of responses to polling questions, they grouped the respondents into the following clusters: consistently pro-choice (16 percent), personally opposed pro-choice (8 percent), reticent pro-choice (7 percent), conveniently pro-life (14 percent), privately pro-life (19 percent), and consistently pro-life (33 percent). A quick glance shows

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that only half of Americans are firm and unconflicted in their views on abortion and, of those, twice as many are pro-life as pro-choice.

Space precludes my providing a full explanation of the specific beliefs of the other clusters (although the labels provide some indication), but the most striking lesson they teach is that although more people than not regard abortion as the taking of life and have serious doubts about the moral grounds for permitting it, more people support the pro-choice than the pro-life position even though the pro-life position would seem to be the most consistent with their deepest beliefs. The reasons for the inconsistencies are many, including the all-too-human willingness to countenance an abortion for a specific person (oneself, a daughter) even though one opposes abortion on principle. But Hunter insists, presumably in an attempt to educate the leaders of the pro-life movement, that the most important reason lies in the broad resonance of the terms "rights" and "choice" among the American public. In other words, many people who unambiguously consider abortion immoral refuse to take a stand against other people's rights and choice.

To deepen the picture of American opinion provided by the polling data, Hunter and his research assistants then conducted a series of extensive interviews with "ordinary" citizens. The interviews revealed, if anything, more ambivalence about abortion than the polls and, yet more arrestingly, revealed the extent of Americans' ambivalence about their own reasons for their views about abortion. As the polling data suggested, the interviewers consistently found that people's private views did not perfectly mesh with their public positions. Many of those with whom they spoke were simply unwilling to impose their views upon others, for, as one woman put it, "I would say my views are true for me, but I can't put that on someone else. I just can't force my truths on other people." And another woman admitted that she might be "wimping out," but she could not bring herself to tell another woman that the fetus she was carrying was a person, "because she's the one that ultimately makes that decision." Other people acknowledged inconsistency in their views, but fell back on, "That's just how I feel." And some people even admitted that concerns about overpopulation by "poor" and "minority" children tempered their willingness to defend a pro-life policy.

The reasons for inconsistency and ambivalence are virtually as numerous as there are individuals, which, as Hunter firmly insists, is the point. Acknowledging abortion as a moral or ethical issue, people nonetheless tend to relativize and personalize it. What matters to most people is "how I feel about it." What worries most people is the unfairness of judging others when you do not know their personal history. If you do not know how life "feels" to other people, how can you possibly tell them what to do? The older moral traditions that still nourish and inform what Hunter calls the "languages of conviction" persist in American culture, but only in the realm of personal meaning. Americans invoke them, but refuse to regard them as publicly binding. The devastating result of this personalization of morality is the radical dissociation of people's categories of moral understanding from "any formal or theoretical schemes of moral reflection." In the absence of knowledge of the law, substantive traditions of moral understanding, or cohesive moral communities, we are left with only our emotions as a guide to morality. "Public debate among citizens becomes an exercise in emoting toward one another."

The institutions of civil society do nothing to redress this trend toward the personalization and relativization of morality. To the contrary, most of them in one way or another aid and abet it. Hunter singles out the media, the polling establishment, the professional associations, and the institutions of faith for special consideration in this regard, although he insists that they but serve as examples of a much broader trend. Most of us need little reminding that the media may fairly be charged with both bias and superficiality, although some of Hunter's specific examples are especially chilling. But the professional associations are another matter, since the media normally treat them gently and the larger public is still likely to hold them in considerable esteem, if only on the assumption that professionalism still bears some relation to objectivity, considered judgment, and impartial consideration of the available evidence. Hunter's discussion of the behavior of the American Bar Association and a large group of historians in relation to the abortion controversy should dispel any such illusion. Given the ABA's great prestige, not to mention its quasi-official role in validating judicial appointments, the story of the way it abandoned its longstanding policy of neutrality on controversial political issues in order to pass a pro-choice resolution in 1992 will strike many readers as deeply disquieting. But in some ways Hunter's account of the way in which a group of historians drafted and rounded up support for an amicus brief at the time of the *Webster* decision is more disquieting yet. In the case of the historians, Hunter argues, the brief rested upon dubious, if not dishonest, use of recognized historical evidence. [See "In the Case of Martha Nussbaum" elsewhere in this issue—ed.]

The real point is that professional associations betray their institutional identity and mission when they take partisan stands on behalf of their members or betray accepted professional standards in the service of a partisan political cause. In this respect such associations, and, sadly, churches as well, are increasingly behaving like political lobbies rather than civil institutions. Or, to put it differently,

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their actions are fundamentally undermining their most important identity and function. For once the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), or any other church, starts behaving like Standard Oil or Dow Chemical, it loses its claim to be anything but another interest group. One can easily imagine the justifications that activists would advance on behalf of the partisanship of professional and religious institutions: the issue (in this instance abortion) transcends the realm of mere partisanship. To defend a woman's "right" to choose is not to defend a political position but a fundamental right, and so, conversely, is the defense of a fetus' "right" to life. In this respect, notwithstanding implacable differences, both sides insist that abortion raises issues of justice and morality that transcend partisanship. Yet both sides defend their "transcendent" views with all of the weapons of partisanship.

The prevalence of such views ominously underscores the problem Hunter is engaging. For we do live in a world in which moral battles have become intensely partisan, but then they always have been. There is nothing new in American history about the conflict of moral values per se. Slavery, prohibition, women's suffrage, desegregation, to cite only a few, have all divided the American people along moral fault lines. But now, more readily than before, we find a conflict of moral values grounded not in theology but ideology, not in cohesive community traditions but in personal preferences.

In a final section on American attempts to deal with ethnic and cultural diversity, Hunter convincingly argues that the current wave of multicultural education is simultaneously reinforcing and diluting differences among groups, with the ultimate effect of reinforcing a mindless individualism or personalism. By an extraordinary sleight of hand, multiculturalism, he argues, has replaced the political idea that all persons and groups should be treated equally under the law with the idea that all *cultures* are equal. "No moral differences are allowed, for to suggest that one culture is better, more virtuous, and more excellent, and others are worse—why, this would be 'undemocratic.' "

Ours has become a world in which virtually all moral issues are contested. As a result there is an accelerating tendency to claim more and more partisan issues as issues of fundamental rights or morality and, conversely, to treat more and more moral issues as the object of partisan struggle. Thus while an increasing number of Americans are coming to regard morality as a private matter that should not be imposed upon others, increasing numbers are also determined that their personal moral vision should prevail. Ponder the relation between these two observations: morality has become largely if not exclusively a matter of personal feeling; moral issues must be fought and lobbied for like any other political spoil. One is left to conclude that although there is a general feeling that no common morality is possible or even desirable, each group or faction will attempt to impose its morality on all.

In conclusion Hunter argues that we need a revitalization of our democracy both through the practice of mutual tolerance in the service of finite goals (as when pro-choice and pro-life women work together to ease the situation of poor women who confront unintended pregnancies) and through the cultivation of continuing, substantive, and informed discussion of the issues that divide us within the context of a reinvigorated local political practice. The conclusion, understandably, is brief, perhaps because Hunter is much too intelligent not to know that it offers little more than a utopian leap of faith. Few readers, I suspect, will find it an adequate response to the problems that the book so chillingly sets forth. But the very weaknesses of the conclusion instructively invite us to reconsider the analysis of the book as a whole.

The single greatest strength of *Before the Shooting Starts* may well lie in Hunter's penetrating discussion of the ways in which morality has devolved from a public to a private matter. Thus one could read the entire book as a delineation of the triumph of a radical individualism in American culture and politics. Having argued something similar in *Feminism Without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism*, I am predictably sympathetic to Hunter's argument. Yet I remain disturbed by his apparent reluctance to push his insights to their logical conclusion and by his puzzling silence on the specific nature of the culture war that troubles him. Part of the difficulty may derive from an excess of caution. Here and there, Hunter suggests that our most hotly contested moral questions were previously understood as fundamentally religious questions. Here and there, he forcefully reminds us that such moral questions can never be settled by the creation of consensus—that those who take morality seriously do not view moral questions as relative. Even today, there are few Americans on either side of the culture war who would argue that the practice of raping young girls (or boys) or selling them into white slavery should be treated as a matter of local preference. But Hunter's determination not to align himself with one or another side in the culture war threatens to undermine his argument, not least because it smacks of a concern with the very consensus that he so cogently dismisses as illusory.

Many historical developments, notably the emergence of our global economy, have combined to produce our current travail. But most of the issues that immediately concern Hunter have a more direct origin, notably in the sexual revolution of the 1960s. For even if one plausibly contends that the sexual revolution itself resulted from massive economic change, it remains no less true that it has had an almost incalculable discrete effect on American society and values. By freeing "nice" young women to

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have sex before marriage without ruining their reputations or prospects—and that seems to have been all that most people initially wanted—the sexual revolution unleashed a process that with accelerating rapidity resulted in an unprecedented divorce of sex from morality. Simply put, most people came to agree that a young woman's premarital virginity was not a moral issue. But once that much had been accepted, many people lost the conviction that it was possible or desirable to condemn other forms of sexual behavior as immoral—as inadvisable, dangerous, irresponsible, perhaps, but not immoral. From these attitudes sprang the view that sexuality of all forms and, increasingly, at all ages, was a merely private matter.

Hunter claims that abortion constitutes a useful prism through which to view an entire spectrum of contested issues, but, for one who seems genuinely concerned with the future of public morality in American society, he seems less than candid—or less analytically sharp than he usually appears. For abortion is not one issue among many: it is *the* issue. Gay rights, single motherhood, distribution of condoms in the schools, and related issues have important claims upon our moral consciences and public policies, but alone among all of these abortion explicitly conflates the issue of sexuality with the issue of life. The pro-choice activists have been remarkably successful in defining abortion as a matter of personal and sexual privacy or freedom, thereby obscuring the question of life. Pro-life activists have defined abortion as a question of life, thereby sidestepping the question of sexual freedom. In this respect, the pro-life activists have, in some measure, resisted the conflation of the claims of life with the denial of sexual freedom, but many of them, as Hunter acknowledges, retain a strong preference for traditional female roles, including men's control of women's sexuality. Unless I am sorely mistaken, nothing will turn that clock back, not least because so many men are cutting women adrift. These days the control of female sexuality seems almost as likely to take the form of rape or abuse as to take the form of a faithful husband who supports a woman and their children throughout her life. So long as pro-life activists even appear to fall into that confusion, they will not merely sacrifice the high ground, they will inadvertently contribute to our continuing inability to defend questions of morality as public questions.

Impartiality notwithstanding, there seems little doubt that Hunter is himself committed to the notion of a public morality, which makes all the more puzzling his failure to engage morality's religious foundations. He acknowledges in passing that public morality has traditionally rested upon religious foundations, but he does not explore the state of those foundations in our own time. No doubt the growth of secularism, ecumenicism, and multiculturalism have played a role, but external forces alone do not account for what has been happening within the churches, notably the Protestant denominations, which are wrestling with the same tensions as the secular world. The churches' move toward the status of political lobbies is but one part of the story. The other part concerns their internal conflicts about the nature of religious authority in an age in which biblical inerrancy exhibits decreasing plausibility and commands decreasing adherence. But in retreating from biblical inerrancy, the churches have also retreated from adherence to the Bible as the Word of God. They have thereby undermined the very basis for an objective and authoritative morality. Like the larger world, they have steadily been giving ground to the claims of individual conscience.

The recognition of a theological and spiritual crisis of religious authority should underscore the importance of differentiating the central moral questions from peripheral, if related, concerns. There are clear links, notably with respect to family authority, between sex education in the schools and abortion, but the existence of links does not dictate that one treat the two issues as of comparable moral import. To rest the defense of an authoritative public morality on an issue like sex education means to risk reinforcing the view that abortion itself is merely a matter of public policy or private sexual freedom. The culture wars in the plural do tend to cluster into recognizable patterns, but by no stretch of the imagination do they fall into the neat pattern that would permit one to speak of a single war with clearly opposing antagonists. The culture war in the singular is another matter entirely, and it is a war that those who cling to some notion of public morality are losing precisely because of the tendency to claim too much. At this point, all that we may safely say is that any public morality must include some explicit pronouncement about the nature of human life—when it begins, when it ends, and the conditions under which one human may take the life of another, whether at the beginning or the end. For as Hunter knows, to leave these questions to the determination of private consciences, much less personal feeling, is to sacrifice the very concept of morality as necessarily public, difficult, discriminating, and authoritative.

Until very recently, American democracy has always assumed a moral base line. That that base line and the vigorous practice of democracy, which Hunter seeks, apparently disintegrated together should be food for thought. It is difficult to imagine how we may hope to restore the one without the other. FT

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Books In Review

Death With Dignity?

LETTING GO: DEATH, DYING, AND THE LAW. By MELVIN I. UROFSKY. *Scribner's. 204 pp. $22.50.*

HOW WE DIE: REFLECTIONS ON LIFE'S FINAL CHAPTER. By SHERWIN B. NULAND. *Knopf. 278 pp. $24.*

Reviewed by **Francis Canavan**

A PROFESSOR of constitutional law and a doctor write about dying and death from their respective points of view. Melvin Urofsky is on the faculty of Virginia Commonwealth University; Sherwin Nuland teaches surgery and the history of medicine at Yale University. Each of them, however, addresses the same problem: What should the individual do, and society permit, when the phenomenal advances in the medical profession's ability to sustain life reach the point where efforts to prolong it become, in Dr. Nuland's words, "well-meant exercises in futility" and cause continued suffering rather than relief and cure?

Each book is a readable survey of its field because it is enlivened by numerous stories of real cases in law and medicine, and discusses the issues they raise in relation to real people. Urofsky gives us the current state of the law in regard to "the right to die," suicide and assisted suicide, mercy killings, the right of condemned criminals to be executed if that is what they want, letting deformed babies die by refusal of care, and "living wills."

Like everyone else, of course, he writes from a particular point of view. A dust-jacket blurb written by the president of the American Civil Liberties Union puts it well: "While Urofsky objectively describes competing moral concerns and legal arguments, his humane concept of the 'right to life' comes shining through: a concept that respects the autonomy and dignity of competent adults, and accordingly embraces their right to determine if and when their lives are no longer worth living."

That he honestly tries to be objective and accurate is certainly true, and to a large extent he succeeds. But sometimes he is in over his depth. Thus, he quotes Daniel Maguire as declaring that "the morality of terminating life, innocent or not, is an open question although it is widely treated as a closed one." But Professor Maguire is hardly an authoritative voice in Catholic moral theology, and the question is not open merely because he says so. Nor does Urofsky really know what he is talking about in saying: "When medicine could not alleviate pain, Catholic moral theologians termed pain a means by which God purified man of sin." The Crucifixion as the supreme atonement for mankind's sins is central to the Christian religion, but not because the authors of the New Testament didn't foresee the wonders that modern medicine would achieve.

Nonetheless, allowances made for the biases and gaps in knowledge that afflict us all, Urofsky's book is well worth reading as an account of what the law is at this time in regard to letting go of life. He summarizes it in these terms: "First, it is now well established that both the common law and the Constitution support a right to die, that is, a right to terminate medical treatment, including the cessation of nutrition and hydration." Once it is established that a patient is competent and has voluntarily chosen the cessation of a treatment, the doctor and the hospital must obey. If the patient is not incompetent, "the law recognizes the right of a surrogate to make the necessary decisions."

DR. NULAND'S title, *How We Die,* aptly describes the content of his book. In language that the medical layman can easily understand, he unflinchingly, unsparingly, and in detail describes the process by which diseases such as heart failure, Alzheimer's, and cancer will eventually kill us all, and, if they do not, old age surely will. Not all of us die of disease, however; murder, accidents, suicide, and euthanasia are alternative ways of dying, and he describes how and why they, too, bring about death.

It is not a pleasant book to read but it is a fascinating one. It can be recommended to all who want to see life steadily and see it whole, including its inevitable end in death. Others may feel like the schoolgirl who was assigned to write a review of a book on penguins, and did it in one sentence: "This book tells me more about penguins than I really wanted to know." I myself could have lived comfortably without knowing quite so much as Dr. Nuland has told me about the process of aging that is inexorably moving what I had thought was my healthy body toward its final disintegration.

Still, ignorance is not always bliss. As Dr. Nuland says, "Good health is a guarantee of nothing." Even the healthiest body must eventually wear out and die, not often at a time that we can predict. Nuland tells us this, not to shock or dismay us, but to enable us better to accept reality.

> I have written this book as much for myself as for everyone who reads it. By trooping some of the army of the horsemen of death across the field of our vision, I hope to recall the things I have seen, and make them familiar to everyone else. . . . If they become just a bit more familiar, perhaps these horsemen will also become less frightening, and perhaps those decisions that must be made can be sought out in an atmosphere less charged with half-knowledge, anxiety, and unjustified expectations.

Unjustified expectations are the main object of Nuland's criticism. He directs it chiefly at medical spe-

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cialists who look upon disease and death as enemies to be conquered and who carry attempts to overcome them to the point of giving the patient false hopes of recovery, disregarding his suffering in futile efforts to score a medical triumph. How fair this is to the medical specialists is not for me to say. But one can sympathize with Nuland when he says of himself, "The conditions of my illness may not permit me to 'die well' or with any of the dignity we so optimistically seek, but within the limits of my ability to control, I will not die later than I should for the senseless reason that a highly skilled technological physician does not understand who I am."

"DECISIONS THAT must be made" and "ability to control" are the key terms that state the basic issue in these two books. The decisions concern what Urofsky calls passive euthanasia, meaning "the withdrawal of 'heroic' or other measures that keep a moribund person alive." He distinguishes it from active euthanasia, where "one takes a positive action that leads directly to the death of another person." Active euthanasia, he adds, "is considered murder in most legal and religious systems." Therefore, while we may expect it to become more and more a political issue, it is not yet the issue in most cases that come before courts. The "ability to control" is the measure of freedom to make these decisions that the law or their own moral beliefs allow to individuals or to their surrogates (who are usually their family members).

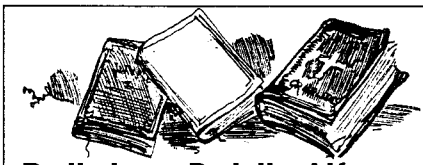
Such decisions do indeed have to be made, and the progress of medicine has made them all the more urgent. Neither of these writers pleads for total freedom to make those decisions. Urofsky explicitly recognizes the state's power as *parens patriae* "to protect the interests and well-being of its citizens and to intervene on their behalf when necessary." But for fully thirty years now it has been clear, to this reviewer at least, that as euthanasia became a live political issue, the pragmatic, problem-solving American mind would see no significant moral difference between killing and letting die, since in either case the patient is just as dead and free from pain.

Urofsky seems to lean that way when he says, "In both instances, a decision is made to take or cease certain procedures in the expectation that death will result." He acknowledges that questions about the morality of suicide "are far more complex than the often heard 'Whose life is it anyway?'" But it is fair to say that, on the ground of personal autonomy, he is not unsympathetic to suicide and "assisted suicide" in what he regards as hard cases.

NULAND believes that "taking one's own life is almost always the wrong thing to do." But he approves of it in the case of a physician who "knowingly facilitated" the suicide of a patient whom he had treated for a long time, knew well, and who had convinced him early on that she preferred to die rather than go through a long and losing battle with cancer. One understands Nuland's feelings in the matter. But we live in a country where half the marriages break up, nearly a third of pregnancies are aborted, a plague of AIDS that Nuland calls pandemic is spread mainly by homosexual intercourse and the use of infected drug needles, and the rate of out-of-wedlock births steadily rises. These and similar facts do not inspire confidence in the ability of Americans to resort to suicide only in rare and compelling cases, if it should become accepted as morally and legally permissible. Better to stick to the belief that the Everlasting hath indeed fixed His canon against self-slaughter, but does not oblige us to use any and every way of prolonging life no matter how burdensome the means or how slight the hope of recovery.

Nuland calls himself "a confirmed skeptic," but says of God: "Nothing would please me more than proof of His existence, and of a blissful afterlife, too." He does not explain why he insists on proof, but it may be the result of having gone to college and medical school, where he learned that the scientific method is the only road to truth. However that may be, the Judaism in which he was raised still has an obvious influence on his mind and heart. He is familiar with its Bible, knows its prayers, and has often recited the Kaddish since his mother's death. "If there is a God," he says, "He is present as much in the creation of each of us as He was at the creation of the earth"—and Dr. Nuland acts as if he truly believed that.

He is a dedicated physician who genuinely cares for his patients. He will help them to get well if he can, and he thinks that on their part they should try: "Few people faced with a diagnosis of potentially remediable malignant disease should be willing to give up the struggle if there is any reasonable chance that some promising form of treatment is available to lessen the ravages of the disease or cure it. To do anything less is not stoicism, but folly."



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But he maintains that "our own choices should be allowed, insofar as possible, to be the decisive factor in the manner of our going," i.e., not the doctor's or the hospital's. If patients are dying and are beyond reasonable hope of recovery, he believes that they should be told so, and not be deceived and tormented with desperate and probably useless medical procedures. He regards the current ideal of "death with dignity" as largely a myth: "I have not often seen much dignity in the process by which we die." Yet death comes to all of us, and we do better "by knowing the truth and being prepared for it."

A Man for Our Time?

THE MAGUS OF THE NORTH: J. G. HAMANN AND THE ORIGINS OF MODERN IRRATIONALISM. By ISAIAH BERLIN. *Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 160 pp. $21.*

Reviewed by **Thomas K. Carr**

NORMALLY, convention dictates that when reviewing a book by a well-known scholar one should devote one's opening comments to an assessment of that scholar's achievements. A sense of what is practicable in so short a space prompts me otherwise. With his acuteness of intellect, range of interest, the sheer magnitude of his published work and extracurricular activities, Isaiah Berlin makes the task for anyone attempting a life-synopsis dauntingly difficult.

Consider: Berlin has published essays on Belinsky, Tolstoy, Marx, Pasternak, Schiller, Turgenev, Montesquieu, Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt, Mill, Vico, Verdi, Hobbes, Locke, Ben-Gurion, Nabokov, and Disraeli; and books on such themes as human freedom, personal identity, nationalism, the Enlightenment, and the philosophies of history, science, and art. At Oxford he has been a Fellow of New College (1938-50), Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory (1957-67), first President of Wolfson College (1966-75), and a Fellow of All Souls where he is now. During World War II he served the British Foreign Office in Washington and Moscow. He was President of the British Academy from 1974 to 1978. He still makes regular appearances on the BBC and has for many years been a director of the Royal Opera House. Berlin is not a scholar; he is his own cottage industry.

It is therefore surprising that so universal a figure enjoying in late life such well-earned fame and influence would turn the powers of his pen not to the suffering economy of his adopted nation, nor to peace in the Middle East (a theme close to his Jewish heart), nor any other current issue of weight, but instead to an obscure, isolated, altogether neglected thinker from another time and place. Johann Georg Hamann (1730-88), German philosopher and sometime theologian, had been resting peacefully in relative oblivion, great fodder for the occasional dissertation but otherwise banished to footnotes and appendices. Resting, that is, until Berlin took it upon himself to rescue him. Convinced that this self-styled oracular sage—the "Magus of the North" he liked to be called—had something to say to *our* time and place, Berlin applied his customary powers of sympathy and imagination to penetrate some of history's most notoriously opaque writing. The result, artfully edited by Berlin's long-time assistant, Henry Hardy, is a clear and convincing account of one of the modern period's most unique and original thinkers who, having refused to countenance their advent, began discussion on some of the very issues that still stupefy our own best and brightest.

HAMANN was born in Königsberg, home of Immanuel Kant, who both admired and befriended Hamann despite the latter's sometimes vicious attacks on Kantian rationalism. In no sense a professional philosopher—he called himself an "ignoramus," his mind "a blotting paper," and his style a mix of "fragments, leaps, and hints"—Hamann made his living as a secretary-translator and later as a government warehouse manager. He never married but did live in his later years with one of his father's servants to whom he remained faithful all his life and with whom he had four children. He was fond of food and drink and travelled on business to England and Germany, Poland once, but otherwise lived within his meager means.

Hamann's conversion to pietistic Christianity at the age of twenty-eight centered on a devout, daily reading of the Bible—a practice he never abandoned. The pillars of his faith were few and straightforward: that the Bible, nature, and history are keys to self-understanding; that self-understanding is the key to an understanding of God. His defense of them was equally tenacious: faith is essentially a mystical relation between the soul and God, impervious to analytical reason and therefore beyond reach of the philosophers. Testimony to the power of this simple if not entirely original vision came from a certain Russian Princess named Golitsyn, a wealthy Catholic who looked upon Hamann as a saint and who made sure his last years were spent in comfort. He died in her house in Münster and is buried nearby, "a peculiar and enigmatic figure," writes Berlin, "to the end."

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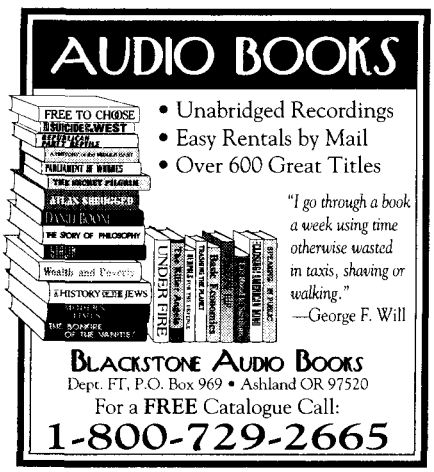
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Ever since Hegel wrote a long and inflammatory review of his work, Hamann has been considered an irrationalist too ambivalent and paradoxical to merit attention. In Berlin's estimate this is not far from the truth: "It does not matter where in [Hamann's] writings one begins," he comments,

> nothing has a beginning or a middle or an end. . . . The thread of argument, such as it is, is constantly being broken by other arguments or topics, digressions within digressions . . . and the continuity of thought emerges, after a long passage in underground channels, in some unexpected place, and is once again soon buried under the luxuriant, irrepressible, chaotic, scattered tropical growth of Hamann's ideas and images.

Yet Hamann's wit and radicality of doctrine caught the attention of Goethe, Herder, and Jacobi, three rather sensible Romantics, and later that of Humboldt, Schleiermacher, and Kierkegaard, the last of whom, Berlin tells us, "revered him." To be sure, Hamann despised his age, denouncing above all the Enlightenment's trust in metaphysical axioms and a priori arguments at the expense of cognition derived from personal experience and the persistent introspection of feelings. Still, antirationalism is not the same as irrationalism. Hamann's equals are Pascal and Polanyi, not Nietzsche and Derrida. Berlin admits as much in a passage that bristles with damningly faint praise, exposing his own qualified assent to the Enlightenment:

> The fact that Hamann's [anti-Enlightenment argument] was ill-conceived, overdone, naive, ludicrously exaggerated and irresponsible, or touched with bitter and savage obscurantism and a blind hatred of some of the noblest moral and artistic . . . achievements of mankind, does not lessen its importance. . . . For some of what is most original in Hamann turned out to be in large measure disturbingly valid.

TO BE SURE, Berlin is himself a rationalist versed in the heady Oxbridge school of philosophical analysis as well as commensurate traditions from the Continent. What is there, then, of enough validity to Berlin to be worth his delving so deeply into Hamann's thought? Certainly not his theory of knowledge, his justification of private judgment and self-guaranteed certitude based solely on contact with God: Berlin is far too consensus-minded a thinker to countenance that. Hamann believes against the Enlightenment theory, which Berlin himself holds, that it is not man-made concepts but the cohesive presence of God's Spirit that gives unity to the *disjecti membra* of sense impressions (which makes Hamann less a "genuine nominalist" than Berlin claims him to be).

Might it then be that Hamann's nature mysticism—"if I stumble and err"—paraphrases Berlin's, "I have but to read the Bible or study human history or look at nature to see what it is that God's creatures are meant to do; for there are parables and allegories everywhere around me"? Perhaps. Considering the demand today for a coherent eco-theology, Hamann proves here to be possible source material: he believes that placing human reason above nature is a "hideous chimera," a "bleak construction of the rationalizing intellect," and prefers instead to leave human destiny to the variable flux and vicissitudes of life in and through which, aided by intuition and a love for God, we are each of us individually to discover our destinies. Indeed, Hamann comes close to pantheism (which Berlin is right to deny) when he insists, like Hegel, that the Almighty be brought within the confines of time. But his disbelief in world progress puts him in line not with Spinoza but Whitehead, not New Age theosophy but the process theologies of Cobb and Ogden. Still, to Berlin's consideration, there is nothing really original here, nothing not "already to be found in Eckhart and Tauler and Böhme and the whole German mystical tradition."

Thus it is neither his epistemology (which Berlin rejects outright) nor his theology (of mere historical interest) for which Hamann is best remembered. Rather it is Hamann's "new and original theory of language" that in Berlin's estimation affords him lasting significance in the annals of history. "Hamann's view of language," he writes, "is at once the most central and the most original doctrine in the rich and disordered world of his ideas, and perhaps the most fertile." One of the book's lengthiest chapters and its only appendix are devoted to the subject, the import of which is only just beginning to be fully appreciated. Here the world-historical Hamann was to shine forth.

HAMANN'S critique of language was born amidst a controversy launched by Condillac in 1746 about the origins of speech. It divided those who believed speech to be a merely human invention, a product of nature or creative activity, from those who for religious reasons believed it to have been given to mankind by God. On the former side stood Rousseau, who in 1755 claimed language to be a thing created by human thought to fit a specific need, i.e., communication, and therefore that thought precedes and is independent of language just as language

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precedes speech. Also on their side was Herder, Hamann's disciple, whose celebrated thesis of 1772 attacked the theological notion of a complete language springing forth fully armed, grammar and all, before human reason had the chance to develop to a level capable of producing such a thing on its own. While language "reveals God in the light of a higher day . . . his work is a human soul which itself creates and continues to create its own language."

Hamann was furious at his beloved student's degree of naturalism (he later shifted loyalties to Jacobs) and attacked Herder bitterly. What arose then was Hamann's own unique theory, previously scattered among his mostly occasional writings, and which Berlin neatly summarizes for the reader in eight straightforward claims:

> (a) that there is no "perfect language" which mirrors reality without remainder;
> (b) that universally valid propositions, therefore, are elusive and illusory;
> (c) that rules and laws are temporal, impermanent holds on reality;
> (d) that theoretical abstraction creates imaginary entities which have no relation to real life;
> (e) that every language is a way of life based on patterns of communal experience;
> (f) that there is no universal language into which particular languages can be translated;
> (g) that only by entering into its actual everyday usage is a language to be understood;
> (h) that we must distrust grammar and rely instead on the peculiarities of concrete word usage.

"This is surely a doctrine," Berlin comments, "that was not wholly unfamiliar in the middle of our century among English-speaking philosophers" (i.e., postwar Cambridge under Wittgenstein). Yet what is more interesting, and indeed more relevant to current issues, is Hamann's insistence that "language is the first and last organ of reason." The Cartesian notion that there are ideas, "clear and distinct," which can be contemplated by a detached mind, a notion peddled in some form by all rationalists, was for Hamann a fallacy. Ideas arise from the senses and are so intertwined with the words used to think and express them as to form one indissoluble, "organic" entity: namely, language. As such, words are the bearers of human experience, stamped with life, and the richer, therefore, the better—a theme that especially inspired Goethe.

It is this poetic vision of language, of the inextricable unity of words and lived experience, that has been taken up today by the school of postmodern hermeneutics. Issuing from the writings of Nietzsche, Husserl, and the late Heidegger, such figures as Merleau-Ponty, Bloom, Saussure, Rorty, and Derrida (the last notoriously) have pushed this reason-language unity to its limit. They have concluded that reality as we know it is merely a product of language, constituted differently in accordance with the different ways we speak about it; that there are, therefore, as many "realities" as there are languages.

This nihilistic vision is at points echoed in Hamann: "Where there is no word," he writes, "there is no reason—and no world," for language and reason are one. Yet unlike his deconstructionist successors, the identity of speech and thought does not lead Hamann to limit reality to the humanly spoken, for underlying every disparate word is the Word of God, "as near and as easy as a child's play." "For me," wrote Hamann cryptically, "every book is a Bible." It is this infinite linguistic frame that enables Hamann's rationalist critique to retain its sensibility. Rather than denying a reality outside the text qua Derrida, for Hamann everything is text, for everything is the language of God. Hamann's is a world bristling with divine presence and creative energy—a world like Schiller's "initiate" in *Gods of Greece* for whose "consecrated eyes everything bears the divine trace."

Are these the rantings of a disreputable thinker properly cloaked in obscurity? Perhaps they are to those who have never read Hamann, or who dismiss Romanticism as the emotional masturbation of those too self-obsessed to think critically. But Berlin, the consummate rationalist, does not think so. While his sympathies for Hamann are qualified, Berlin believes that trading the values of materialism and technological progress for those of heart and soul is not only profitable, in the long run at least, but also authentically human. Hamann will never become the darling of either the deconstructionists prophesying the future or the reactionary defenders of past forms of life. He is instead a man for *our time* even if he was not a man for his. Hamann speaks for those who, like Berlin, are firmly planted in the present, and who seek to defend its inarticulate, mysteriously dark depths out of which the great poet-God addresses us.

Educating for Civic Virtue

THE LEARNING OF LIBERTY: THE EDUCATIONAL IDEAS OF THE AMERICAN FOUNDERS. By LORRAINE SMITH PANGLE and THOMAS L. PANGLE. *University Press of Kansas. 350 pp. $35.*

Reviewed by **Charles L. Glenn**

INDEPENDENCE WON, George Washington faced a near-mutiny of his officers, unwilling to return to civilian life until their arrears of salary had been paid. Washington appeared unexpectedly at a meeting of the officers and

> gave an impassioned appeal to reason and moderation, to the men's duty, their patriotism, and their honor. Sensing that

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> the officers' smoldering resentment was still unquenched, he produced a reassuring letter from a congressman. He began to read it, stumbled, paused, and pulled out a pair of spectacles. "I have grown gray in the service of my country," he said, "and now it seems I am going blind." His officers wept, and the uprising crumbled. As Jefferson later observed, "The moderation and virtue of a single character probably prevented this Revolution from being closed, as most others have been, by a subversion of the liberty it was intended to establish."

This incident was familiar to every schoolchild a century ago, but few are told such stories today. Honor, patriotism, moderation, and virtue, and what would once have been called "manly tears," are out of fashion in our schools. Children are told of victims, not of heroes, much less of the courage and integrity that can transform victims into triumphant witnesses (*martyrs*) to what is good and true.

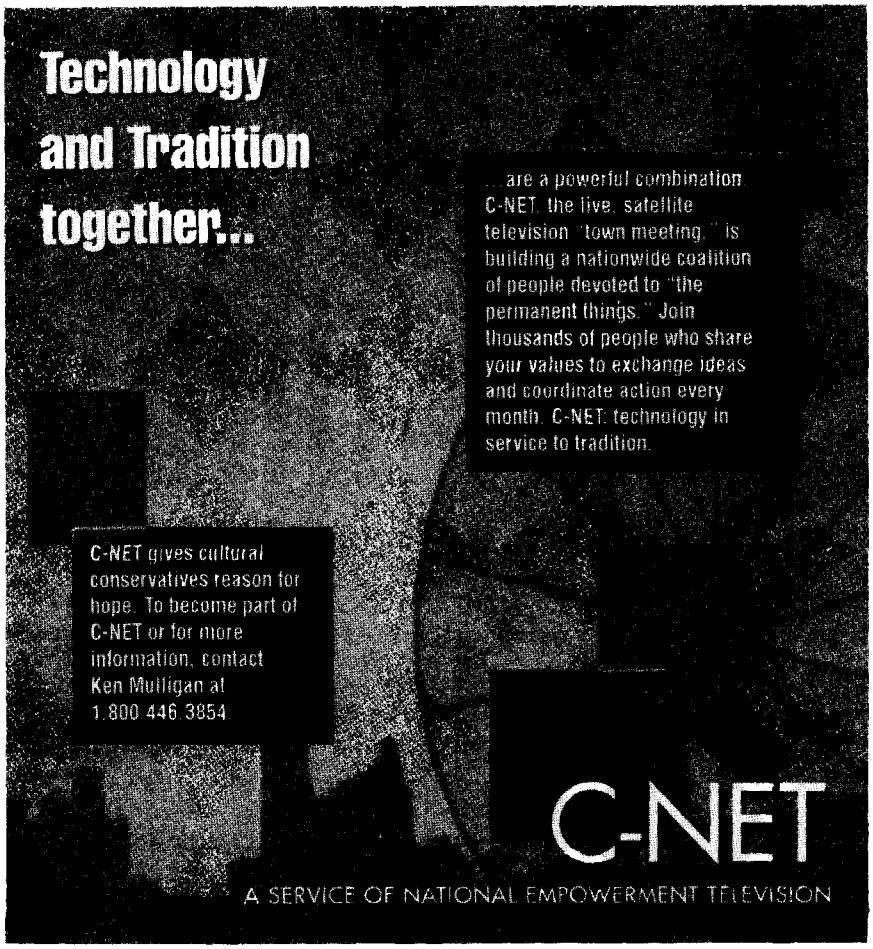
What does this little tale, related toward the end of *The Learning of Liberty*, have to do with the educational ideas of America's Founders? The teaching of civic virtue like Washington's was central to the discussion of schooling by Jefferson, Benjamin Rush, Noah Webster, and other members of the generation that lived through the struggle for independence. Their arguments for a national system of education were based not on considerations of vocational skills or economic development but on the conviction that a republican form of government could only survive with a worthy citizenry, and that to shape citizens through schooling was for such a government a matter of fundamental self-protection.

THE PANGLES provide an illuminating discussion of the source of this idea of civic education, from Aristotle, Plato, and Xenophon through Milton to Rollin and Locke and so to those American leaders who read all of them with close attention. In so doing, the authors help us to understand more clearly the implications of various ways of thinking about the formation of character. Thus the book is to be recommended unreservedly to everyone for whom this is an urgent concern, whether or not the history of formal schooling is among their interests. Indeed, *The Learning of Liberty* does not in fact cast much light on the actual development of the American educational system; it is, rather, a study of unrealized hopes, or of hopes that were realized in unanticipated ways.

The great merit of the Pangles' book is the clarity with which it lays out alternative assumptions about the nature and origins of virtue, especially as these were held by the Founders. We need to be reminded of the intense moral seriousness that shaped their vision of the new nation. We need also—and this is a recurrent theme of this study—to be reminded that there are excellencies *beyond* civic virtue, that education should seek

> not only to lend support to moral integrity but to satisfy the human need for objects of reverence that can give life a higher and more compelling purpose. True education must touch the deepest longings of the spirit; it must appeal to eros, to the imagination, and to the love of beauty. It needs, then, to explore some of the sternest and noblest challenges presented by previous ages, with their alien conceptions of happiness and human flourishing.

Aristotle's concept of "greatness of soul" as the fulfillment of human nature was not an important theme to Jefferson or Franklin, and that it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was not may reflect something stubbornly pragmatic and even pedestrian in the American character. Or perhaps not: the heroes around whose examples American civic education has until recently been centered, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, were offered as examples of just such magnanimity. The relentless debunking of Martin Luther King in our own time is a sign of degeneracy, of a preference for social and economic factors to the exclusion of character as a decisive influence on events. There is something like a native tradition of moral education through biography (unfairly dismissed today as "hagiography," as though it were something beneath contempt) that deserves to be reclaimed.

THAT *The Learning of Liberty* offers little insight into the *actual* development of popular schooling in America is a limitation acknowledged by the authors themselves. The development of popular schooling in America did not grow out of the ideas of Locke, Franklin, or Jefferson, with their advocacy of a non-biblical source of moral teaching. It grew instead out of religious impulses with roots in the Pietist tradition of sanctification through schooling as well as practical needs for literacy and numeracy in a mobile and commercial society. The Pangles do scant justice to the highly decentralized, *local* form that American schooling took during its formative decades, though their discussion of the influence of Noah Webster's school readers, themselves solidly in the Pietist tradition of moral uplift and religious exhortation, should alert the reader to a stream of influences that owed more, ultimately, to Francke and Comenius than to Locke. It was, as the authors note, not Jefferson's Enlightenment-inspired University of Virginia but the strongly Evangelical Yale and Princeton that provided a model for the development of higher education in the nineteenth century. "The Founders," they write, "learned that appeals to the political importance of citizenship education could not produce good schools in the absence of powerfully felt religious motives or vocational needs."

DESPITE THE eloquence of those who called for a national system of civic education, the authors of the *Federalist Papers* did not put their trust in shaping a virtuous citizenry, nor does the Constitution itself mention education among the safeguards of liberty and order. These founding documents rely not upon the inculcation of universal virtue but upon a legal and governmental system holding in check the human propensity to selfishness and disorder. State schooling in the European sense is not part of the American tradition; schooling in virtue is a concern of government at the state level, to be encouraged and supported without imposition of a *pédagogue d'état*. This was expressed eloquently in the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, drafted by John Adams, whose article on education admonishes that

> Wisdom, and knowledge, as well as virtue, diffused generally among the body of the people, being necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties; and as these depend on spreading the opportunities and advantages of education in the various parts of the country, and among the different orders of the people, it shall be the duty of legislatures and magistrates, in all future periods of this commonwealth, to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries of them . . . to encourage private societies and public institutions . . . to countenance and inculcate the principles of humanity and general benevolence, public and private charity, industry and frugality, honesty and punctuality in their dealings, sincerity, good humor, and all social affections, and generous sentiments among the people.

Though schools started under the auspices of locally elected school boards and local churches under indirect government oversight, the actual provision of schooling in the United States has been largely entrusted to the civil society. As the authors point out,

> The fate of the national university and national plans for education suggest what Madison more than once proposed: that our strengths will be found not in uniform schemes imposed from a centralized government above, but in local initiative, diversity, and competition, including both the freedom of students to choose schools and the freedom of schools to experiment. Moreover, we find in both Franklin and Jefferson support for the idea that local initiative should mean above all parental involvement, not only because the school and students' development require it, but equally because parents need the civic education that comes through collectively formulating and pursuing serious goals.

The models offered by Washington and Lincoln had a powerful influence on the development of a sense of nationhood and of the civic virtues necessary to sustain a republic, not because they were imposed through a national system of schooling, but because they were sufficiently compelling to make their way into tens of thousands of locally controlled schools. These models served and can serve again, together with others drawn from the diversity of American life, but only if somehow Americans and those called to teach can learn not to be embarrassed by honor, patriotism, moderation, and virtue, nor even by the manly and womanly tears that are a tribute to greatness of soul.

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Hitler, Spam, and Modernism

THE INTELLECTUALS AND THE MASSES: PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AMONG THE LITERARY INTELLIGENTSIA, 1880-1939. By JOHN CAREY. *St. Martin's. 246 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by **Roger Kimball**

ANYONE SEEKING a vivid illustration of the proposition that an expensive education is no barrier to stupidity will wish to consult John Carey's new book, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939*. Not that the book lacks learning, exactly. Its author, the Merton Professor of English at Oxford and frequent commentator on the BBC, displays all the expected academic curlicues. On the very first page, for example, he speculates that our contemporary use of the term "masses" is religious in origin, deriving from Augustine's vision of a *massa damnata*, a condemned mass of humanity, which in turn derives from the Vulgate: Romans 9:21 speaks of a potter having complete power over a *massa*, a shapeless lump. This allusion has the double advantage of suggesting depths of erudition while also casting aspersions on Christianity for its supposedly unenlightened view of the masses. (An anti-Christian animus, in fact, forms a subplot of the book.) And although it seems odd, to say the least, that a book about "the intellectuals and the masses" in the period from 1880 to 1939 could be written without even mentioning Karl Marx (or Engels or Carlyle or Matthew Arnold or Hannah Arendt or . . . : the list goes on and on), hundreds of endnotes bear witness to Professor Carey's abundant reading in his own literary fiefdom.

The Intellectuals and the Masses began life in the lecture hall. The first part of the book, called "themes," is an elaboration of Professor Carey's T. S. Eliot Memorial Lectures, delivered at the University of Kent in 1989. Two chapters on H. G. Wells in a section of the book called "case studies" (which also includes chapters on Arnold Bennett and Wyndham Lewis) were given as the Henry James Lecture at the Rye Festival in 1990. That everything about Professor Carey's effort is an affront to the memory of Eliot and James—not just to the memory of the men themselves, but to the ideals of culture that they struggled to articulate—is one of the governing ironies of his book.

THE INTELLECTUALS AND THE MASSES is ostensibly an investigation

ROGER KIMBALL *is Managing Editor of the* New Criterion.

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of the social and political attitudes of such fin-de-siècle and early modernist writers as Wells, George Gissing, Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and Lewis: "the response," as Professor Carey puts it, "of the English literary intelligentsia to the new phenomenon of mass culture." In fact, it is an attempt to discredit both the idea of high culture and the vocation of intellectuals by equating them with . . . Hitlerism. Yes, as in the philosophy and practice of Adolf Hitler, German dictator, 1889-1945. More about this later.

In the high school that I attended, the Jesuits encouraged us to meditate on various useful adages. One that *The Intellectuals and the Masses* brought to mind runs as follows: "Never deny, seldom affirm, always distinguish." Professor Carey denies and affirms with breathtaking promiscuity; and as for distinctions, the chief distinction of his book is that it is oblivious to them. Thus, for instance, Eliot and Yeats come out looking suspiciously like Hitler, while Hitler is described in terms that Henry James might be proud of. And while the subject of the book is a group of intellectuals' attitude toward the masses, Professor Carey assures us that there is no such thing as "the masses": the whole idea is, "of course," "a fiction" whose purpose is "to eliminate the human status of the majority of people." (An amusing study might be made of Professor Carey's reliance on the phrase "of course": the more dubious the proposition, the more likely it will be bolstered by an "of course.") In other words, although the masses do not exist in Professor Carey's cosmology, he has taken the trouble to write a book in which they have the starring role. The whole thing is a kind of high-wire act without a safety net.

PROFESSOR CAREY'S thesis is that modernism was born in an access of snobbish revulsion to the spread of literacy and popular culture; modernism, he says, is less a cultural movement motivated by certain aesthetic and spiritual imperatives than a social cabal. Its chief ambition is to exclude as many people as possible from the enjoyment and understanding of culture so that the self-appointed mandarins of culture may enjoy their own superiority unhindered by the press of common folk. In this sense, modernism is fundamentally "antidemocratic." "The intellectuals could not, of course, actually prevent the masses from attaining literacy," Professor Carey explains. "But they could prevent them reading literature by making it too difficult for them to understand—and this is what they did. The early twentieth century saw a determined effort, on the part of the European intelligentsia, to exclude the masses from culture." Hence the aesthetic experiments of a Mallarmé, an Eliot, a Joyce, a Virginia Woolf were undertaken not for any compelling aesthetic or spiritual reason but simply as an exercise in obscurantism.

For Professor Carey, one powerful index of modern intellectuals' alienation from the masses is their disdain for tinned food. Tinned food looms large in the first chapter of *The Intellectuals and the Masses.* Writers as disparate as E. M. Forster, Eliot, Knut Hamsun, John Betjeman, Graham Greene, and Wells didn't like the stuff; hence they were snobbish elitists with no feeling for common humanity. In the work of the popular writer Jerome K. Jerome, tinned food became "genial and amusing" (whatever that can mean), which explains why he receives Professor Carey's Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval and why, in the world according to Carey, the non-tinned-food intellectual establishment rejected Jerome's work as infra dig.

When not ruminating on their own aversion to Spam, many readers will doubtless have occasion to wonder about Professor Carey's grasp of history. They will note that he nominates Gissing, author of *New Grub Street* and other novels, as "the earliest English writer to formulate the intellectuals' case against mass culture." In fact, the masses have always excited writers' consternation. For example, Shakespeare, in one of the *Henry* plays, writes that "the common people swarm like summer flies." This is exactly the kind of statement that Professor Carey pounces on as evidence of elitism in the authors he discusses. Never mind that it is not Shakespeare but a *character* who offers this analogy: another problem with Professor Carey's procedure is that whenever it suits his thesis he fails to distinguish between what characters are made to say and the views of their authors *in propria persona.*

PART OF THE problem is that Professor Carey is in the grip of a paralyzing literalness. "Spatial metaphors of 'high' and 'low' culture," he explains, "are logically meaningless, of course. When Oscar Wilde, for example pronounces that 'Aesthetics are higher than ethics,' it does not actually mean anything, any more than it would mean anything to claim that aesthetics were 2 feet to the left or right of ethics." Really? Would it be impolite to remind the Merton Professor of English that there is a linguistic device, not terribly uncommon, known as metaphor? That when a writer speaks of "high art" he does not mean to imply that such art is *physically* higher than popular art? That when W. H. Auden spoke of the thirties being a "low dishonest decade" he did not, *mirabile dictu,* mean that the thirties were located somewhere *underneath* the decades that came before. One might have hoped that even an Oxford Professor of English might have grasped this distinction.

These are the sorts of things that one encounters throughout *The Intellectuals and the Masses,* but in the end they concern only the details of Professor Carey's presentation. His real complaint about the nefarious machinations of the intelligentsia (Professor Carey uses the terms "intellectual," "modernist," and "intelligentsia" more or less interchangeably) goes far beyond food preferences and spatial metaphors. According to him, writers from Eliot and Yeats to Thomas Hardy (!), D. H. Lawrence, Wells, and Gissing conspired to demonize the masses

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and expel them from the ranks of humanity. Largely because of Eliot's influence, Professor Carey informs us, "the assumption that most people are dead became, by the 1930s, a standard item in the repertoire of any self-respecting intellectual." Moreover, he adds darkly, if most people are dead already, "their elimination becomes easier to contemplate."

It's only a short step from here to the philosophy of Adolf Hitler.

When he expatiates on tinned food and modern intellectuals' dislike of mass society, Professor Carey is unwittingly funny. But when he gets around to drawing parallels between the intelligentsia and Hitler, he goes over the edge. About the time that Professor Carey brings Hitler into the discussion one realizes that the humming sound in one's ears is the theme from *The Twilight Zone* swelling softly in the background. Consider the logic: "It was part of T. S. Eliot's aesthetic theory that the true artist's works transcend time, unlike the products of ephemeral commercial culture." True enough. The same could be said of just about every serious thinker who ever turned his attention to the nature of the appeal of art. But for Professor Carey, Eliot's aesthetic theory is dangerously similar to Hitler's. "Hitler also believed just as firmly as, say, T. S. Eliot or Wyndham Lewis in the permanence of aesthetic values." Hitler also liked dogs. Does a fondness for dogs indicate incipient Nazi tendencies?

Once he has started down this slippery slope, Professor Carey can't help himself. He goes on to suggest that "there are marked similarities between the cultural ideals promulgated in the Führer's writings and conversation and those of the intellectuals we have been looking at." And it is not simply that Hitler believed "just as strongly as the intellectuals in the eternal value of what intellectuals consider great art." He was also—"like many English intellectuals" (may we say "of course"?)—worried about cultural decline and degeneracy, and "blamed this degeneracy on the mass media." There is more. Toward the end of his book Professor Carey informs us that Hitler embraced

> numerous cultural ideas prevalent among English intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century, some of which are still espoused today. The superiority of "high" art, the eternal glory of Greek sculpture and architecture, the transcendent value of the old masters and of classical music, the supremacy of Shakespeare, Goethe, and other authors acknowledged by intellectuals as great, the divine spark that animates all productions of genius and distinguishes them from the low amusements of the mass—these were among Hitler's most dearly held beliefs.

Keep this in mind: like a fondness for dogs, believing that Shakespeare and Goethe were great artists—greater than, say, Jerome K. Jerome—may betoken Nazi sympathies.

According to Professor Carey, there are other ways in which modern intellectuals resemble Hitler. It's not just that they bemoan cultural decline and admire *Hamlet*. They also share a whole range of psychological foibles. In his chapter on "Wyndham Lewis and Hitler," Professor Carey gives us the particulars. "There are," he writes,

> a number of obvious similarities between the two figures. Both were obsessive, and expounded their relatively small collection of ideas with unflagging repetitiveness. Both regarded themselves as unjustly neglected artists, and took this neglect as the central fact around which to construct their distorted and vindictive models of the societies in which they lived. Both were powered to a considerable degree by hatred and resentment.

WHAT IS ONE to make of a book that features Hitler as a champion of high art and has trouble distinguishing between the worldviews of T. S. Eliot and a fascist dictator? "The tragedy of *Mein Kampf*," Professor Carey writes, "is that it was not, in many respects, a deviant work but one firmly rooted in European intellectual orthodoxy." George Orwell's comment to the effect that there are some ideas so silly that only an intellectual could believe them comes to mind. (Incidentally, you might have thought that Orwell—sturdy, nonsense chap that he was—gets good marks from Professor Carey. Not so. Despite his sympathy for the working class, Orwell betrayed various elitist attitudes: to wit, "he believed in freedom, but dirt repelled him.") It is another of this book's central ironies that Professor Carey himself is a member of the species he castigates: he, too, is an intellectual, albeit an academic intellectual, formulating exactly the kind of thing his peers in the lecture hall and

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common room want to hear about the nature of the intellectual vocation today.

What is missing from Professor Carey's portrait of the modern intelligentsia? Good sense. He has noticed that Wells had some crackpot theories about eugenics and that Lewis was a vociferous admirer of Hitler (though he neglects to mention that Lewis recanted in 1938). He has discovered that Eliot was a bit of a snob and that Lawrence espoused some pretty fruity ideas about, well, about almost everything. But what Professor Carey completely fails to appreciate are the problems—spiritual, artistic, social problems—that the writers he discusses were struggling with. Some of these problems are perennial: the artist, the intellectual, has always to some extent set himself apart from his society. Aristotle noticed this quite a while ago when he observed that philosophy arises only when the necessities of life have been secured and there is leisure sufficient for reflection.

Other problems faced by modernist intellectuals were new. By the 1880s, when Professor Carey opens his chronicle, bourgeois commercial society had begun to transform the Western world. Wealth and literacy were spreading with unprecedented swiftness. This brought new cultural opportunities but also new cultural dangers. Many intellectuals saw the world of traditional culture crumbling around them, assaulted by everything from religious skepticism to the rise of a trashy entertainment industry that deliberately blurred the line between serious art and frivolous diversion. One important aspect of this problem was the extent to which commercial interests poached upon the prestige of high culture in order to purvey mass entertainment.

Hannah Arendt saw this clearly in her essay "The Crisis in Culture." "When books or pictures in reproduction are thrown on the market cheaply and attain huge sales," Arendt wrote,

> this does not affect the nature of the objects in question. But their nature is affected when these objects themselves are changed—rewritten, condensed, digested, reduced to kitsch in reproduction, or in preparation for the movies. This does not mean that culture spreads to the masses, but that culture is being destroyed in order to yield entertainment. The result of this is not disintegration but decay, and those who promote it are not the Tin Pan Alley composers but a special kind of intellectual, often well read and well informed, whose sole function is to organize, disseminate, and change cultural objects in order to persuade the masses that *Hamlet* can be as entertaining as *My Fair Lady*, and perhaps educational as well. There are many great authors of the past who have survived centuries of oblivion and neglect, but it is still an open question whether they will be able to survive an entertaining version of what they have to say.

PROFESSOR CAREY is an academic version of the "special kind of intellectual" Arendt is talking about. He can't understand that there might be crucial differences between high art and popular entertainment. In the course of his book, he quotes Auden who, at the end of his life, said that "I don't see how any civilized person can watch TV, far less own a set." Professor Carey expresses wonder and contempt for Auden's dismissal of television. According to him television "has immensely extended the opportunity for knowledge. It has also given the majority, in Britain at any rate, unprecedented access to traditional culture, not only through such star ventures as Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation*, or the BBC Shakespeare series, but through countless everyday drama productions."

There is a great deal that might be said about this observation. Not only does it perfectly embody the type of educated philistinism that Arendt warns us about, but it also reveals an important contradiction in Professor Carey's entire discussion. He professes to value television for providing the masses with access to "the traditional culture." But "the traditional culture" is precisely what Professor Carey denigrates throughout his book. The central failing of the modern intelligentsia, in his view, is largely a function of its attempt to preserve "the traditional culture" in the face of the depredations of mass culture. When Eliot makes the effort to salvage the past, it's an example of cultural elitism; but when television provides its prepackaged, watered-down entertainments, it's a victory for the masses.

Professor Carey's T. S. Eliot Memorial Lectures at the University of Kent are not only a travesty but a tragedy as well. For the fact is that the anticultural animus that informs Professor Carey's reflections are not the eccentric maunderings of an idiosyncratic crank. On the contrary, they represent business as usual in the world of academic discourse today. It tells us a lot that a man who thinks that the cultural imperatives of modernism are indistinguishable from Hitler's murderous tyranny should be invested with one of Oxford's most prestigious professorships.

Professor Carey mentions Auden only to dismiss him as a cultural dinosaur. It is a pleasing and instructive coincidence, however, that Auden himself once delivered the T. S. Eliot Memorial Lectures at the University of Kent. That was in 1967: twenty-odd years before Professor Carey, though from our perspective today it seems like a different epoch. Auden's lectures, published as *Secondary Worlds*, brood about many of the same issues that provoked the writers Professor Carey discusses. At the center of Auden's concern is the place of art in a democratic society. Auden understands, in a way that completely escapes Professor Carey, that modern commercial democracies pose profound challenges to the survival of art and intellectual integrity. He

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speaks, for example, of the "corruption of language" that has been "enormously encouraged by mass education and the mass media." "Until quite recently," Auden observes,

> most people spoke the language of the social class to which they belonged. Their vocabulary might be limited, but they learned it at first-hand from their parents and neighbors, so that they knew the correct meaning of such words as they did use and made no attempt to use any others. Today I would guess that nine-tenths of the population do not know what 30 percent of the words they use actually mean. Thus, it is possible to hear someone who is feeling sick say, "I am nauseous," for a reviewer of a spy-thriller to describe it as "enervating," and for a television star to say of an investment agency which was sponsoring his programme, "They are integrity-ridden." . . . Again, while it is a great blessing that a man no longer has to be rich in order to enjoy the masterpieces of the past, for paperbacks, first-rate color reproductions, and stereophonograph records have made them available to all but the very poor, this ease of access, if misused—and we do misuse it—can become a curse. We are all of us tempted to read more books, look at more pictures, listen to more music than we can possibly absorb, and the result of such gluttony is not a cultured mind but a consuming one; what it reads, looks at, listens to is immediately forgotten, leaving no more traces behind than yesterday's newspaper.

Auden understood that the prospect of a "consumer culture" in which the highest products of civilization become transient fodder for entertainment is really an anticulture. Note well that Auden is not "antidemocratic." Like Matthew Arnold before him, he believed that the work of culture will not be finished until "the raw and unkindled masses of humanity" know the benefits of culture, "until the best that has been thought and known in the world [is] current everywhere." But Auden also knew that pretending that the masses were not "raw and unkindled" or that there is no such thing as "the best" served only to deceive, not to enlighten, his fellow man. Professor Carey prefers pretense to the unpleasant truth. And that is one reason he has written such an execrable book.

BRIEFLY NOTED

HANDBOOK OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGIANS. Edited by WALTER A. ELWELL. *Baker Books. 465 pp. $29.95.*

Almost twenty years ago, *Newsweek* magazine declared 1976 the "Year of the Evangelical." Jimmy Carter's born-again Baptist faith and Charles Colson's best-selling book *Born Again* had caused our media elites to rediscover our country's vibrant, and growing, evangelical subculture. But the intellectual foundations had been set long before, and in this volume we have concise biographies of former, and current, leaders of the evangelical renaissance. For those seeking a broad understanding of the intellectual and theological roots of modern evangelicalism, the thirty-three theologians included here are the place to start. Representing a variety of traditions (Reformed, Lutheran, Anglican, Arminian, Pentecostal, and dispensational), these significant scholars have had a profound impact on twentieth-century evangelical thought. The theologians featured range in date from Augustus H. Strong, who was born in the 1830s, to Oxford's Alister McGrath, born in 1953. They include philosophical and systematic theologians such as B. B. Warfield, Louis Berkhof, J. Gresham Machen, Gordon Clark, Cornelius Van Til, Helmut Thielicke, Carl Henry, E. J. Carnell, Bernard Ramm, J. I. Packer, Donald Bloesch, Thomas Oden, and Clark Pinnock. One can quibble as to why certain persons were included and others omitted. For instance, John R. W. Stott is a popular preacher and biblical expositor par excellence, but not a theologian. And Francis Schaeffer's influence on evangelical intellectual life was significant as a cultural apologist and critic, but not as a systematic theologian. But for those interested in evangelical theological reflection and debate, this is an indispensable source.

— Michael Cromartie

THE HASTENING THAT WAITS: KARL BARTH'S ETHICS. By NIGEL BIGGAR. *Oxford University Press. 194 pp. $35.*

The chaplain of Oriel College, Oxford, proposes the way in which the ethics of the *Church Dogmatics* would have been completed had Barth lived to do the job. Of considerable interest to specialists.

CHAPTERS INTO VERSE: POETRY IN ENGLISH INSPIRED BY THE BIBLE. Edited by ROBERT ATWAN and LAURENCE WIEDER. *Oxford University Press. Two vols., 481 and 391 pp. $25 each.*

A marvelous idea marvelously executed. From Genesis through Revelation, the editors give the pertinent passage and then poetry (from the

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fourteenth century to today) that has been inspired by it. Not all the poetry is great and not all of it is "edifying," but the sum is a magnificent gift, not least to preachers who employ poetry homiletically (a practice sadly neglected in our day). Editor Wieder contributes poetry to this journal.

DICTIONARY OF CULTS, SECTS, RELIGIONS, AND THE OCCULT. By GEORGE A. MATHER and LARRY A. NICHOLS. *Zondervan. 384 pp. $24.95.*

The subject is vast, and there are more than a few gaffes, as might be expected with two authors trying to define, well, just about everything. This is nonetheless an exceedingly useful reference work. Not *the* authoritative word on much of anything, but a helpful introduction to much that literate people should know about the maddeningly confused worlds associated, however marginally, with what is called religion.

THE CALL OF SERVICE: A WITNESS TO IDEALISM. By ROBERT COLES. *Houghton Mifflin. 306 pp. $22.95.*

Coles has become something of a cultural and intellectual icon for his sensitive telling of the stories of others. *The Spiritual Life of Children,* for example, should be read for years to come. Although the aim is entirely laudable (to lift up the importance of voluntarism and service to others), perhaps the present book doesn't quite work because most of those profiled bear the Robert Coles stamp of approval for being in such thorough agreement with Robert Coles. Idealism as self-conscious moral superiority begins to look an awful lot like smugness.

LIBERTY OR EQUALITY: THE CHALLENGE OF OUR TIME. By ERIK VON KUEHNELT-LEDDIHN. *Christendom Press (Front Royal, VA). 395 pp. $14.95 paper.*

Like his friend William F. Buckley, the octogenarian author goes inveighing against every miscreant idea in sight. And Kuehnelt-Leddihn's range of vision covers almost the entirety of the human condition. He inveighs with highest delight against the delusions of democracy and equality. A few hours with these eccentrically erudite essays will reward especially those readers who may be helped to understand why they disagree. That is no little service for a book to render.

THE NEW AGE IS LYING TO YOU. By ELDON K. WINKER. *Concordia. 224 pp. $10.99 paper.*

The title does not leave one in doubt about the author's message. It is one of a growing number of books from Christian publishers on the confused and confusing constellation of ideas and movements called "New Age." This and other such books would be of greater interest if they recognized, first, that "New Age" covers a multitude of sins and, second, it covers a multitude of virtues gone awry. Many of the "discoveries" of New Agers are truths of the Christian tradition too often neglected — e.g., the possibilities of mystical experience, the spiritual significance of nature, the transcendence of self in prayer. Like all heresies, New Age thought is built with pieces of the truth. Of course, that does not obviate the need to point out that the heresy is lying to you.

THE WAR WITHIN: AMERICA'S BATTLE OVER VIETNAM. By TOM WELLS. *University of California Press. 705 pp. $30.*

A history of the antiwar movement written from a very sympathetic perspective. The author, a recent sociology Ph.D. from Berkeley, was too young to be part of the movement, but he has done some careful digging and provides valuable material from interviews with participants. The book is sometimes critical of factions within the movement but never of the presuppositions of the movement itself. Wells believes that the "Vietnam syndrome" is a healthy check against America's militaristic propensities, a view not widely shared among today's former antiwar protestors, who tend to be enamored of the potential of U.S. military power in advancing a global democratic crusade.

DAILY READINGS WITH MOTHER TERESA. Edited by TERESA DE BERTODANO. *HarperCollins. 141 pp. $9 paper.*

So we don't review devotional books, but what's the point of editing a journal if you can't make exceptions? Here is the wisdom and holiness that tells us what we're called to be. A splendid little book.

THE CONSTITUTION OF JUDICIAL POWER. By SOTIRIOS A. BARBER. *Johns Hopkins University Press. 279 pp. $25.95.*

A professor of government at Notre Dame takes on "moral relativists" on the right and the left in this spirited defense of interpreting the Constitution by the measure of "simple justice." He, however, does not do simple justice to the contention of Robert Bork, Walter Berns, and others that it is for the legislatures, not the courts, to frame moral judgment into law.

LAS CASAS: IN SEARCH OF THE POOR OF JESUS CHRIST. By GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ. *Orbis. 682 pp. $34.95.*

The Peruvian father of liberation theology celebrates a sixteenth-century Dominican priest who was "Defender of the Indians" against the depredations of Spanish conquest. The connection with the economic and political questions of the late twentieth century sometimes seems strained, but the book once again makes clear that Gutierrez is a theologian with a deep appreciation of classical Catholic spirituality.

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

The Coming Age of Religion

La Revanche de Dieu was the French title and it caused something of a stir there. Here the book by Gilles Kepel is called *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism in the Modern World* (Pennsylvania State University Press, $35). We were struck by this comment in the *Economist*: "In the contentious admixture of politics and religion, Mr. Kepel is most unusual in not seeking to press a particular view, still less to win converts for any religion or none. . . . And he is persuasive when he concludes that, for better and worse, the political influence of religion will be much greater than it has been in the recent past, not least because today's religious activists are better educated, better off, and more articulate than yesterday's." It is but one of many such comments in recent years, often from unlikely sources and usually expressed in uneasy tones. The assumed link between modernity and secularization did not hold. History is not turning out the way we were educated to think it would. Religion is back, and in a very big way.

There is something to what the *Economist* says about the educational factor, no doubt. On the world scene there are today more well-educated and articulate Muslims than was the case, say, forty years ago. Well-educated and articulate, that is, in Western terms, which enables them to more confidently challenge the hegemony of secular liberal ideas generated by the West. Here in the U.S., the *Economist*'s generalization would apply to Evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics, both of whom were more marginal—some say ghettoized—forty years ago. On the other hand, there were hosts of well-educated, well-off, and articulate religious activists of oldline Protestantism in the past. If religion did not seem to be politically influential (i.e., politically intrusive) then, it is likely because oldline activism was basically in sync with what secular liberalism defined as progress. The civil rights movement that segued into the anti-Vietnam War movement and then into sundry movements of what used to be called the counterculture is the outstanding case in point.

In the current culture wars over everything from abortion to homosexual rights and parental choice in education, however, religious activism is typically contrary to the elite liberal idea of progress. Therefore it is perceived that "the political influence of religion is greater." Religion in this context means culturally conservative religion. Liberal religious activism is by no means dead, although its institutional base has been weakened by the continuing decline of the oldline churches. But such activism is not very visible; it is not likely to occasion comments about the growing influence of religion in public life. In oldline Protestantism, the demise of *Christianity and Crisis* last year was a significant sign. The *Christian Century* picked up its shrunken subscription list, but seems disinclined to pick up its banner of more or less uncritical leftism. Among Catholics, the *National Catholic Reporter* appears to do well, being packed with advertisements for courses and institutes pressing sixtiesh agendas that otherwise show up nowhere on the American political screen. The audience may be ageing, but the *NCR* academic and catechetical networks are constant. Others may want to debate whether that is a case of keeping the faith or being stuck in a time warp.

On the Left

Outside the churches in which it is based, religious activism on the left does not get much attention these days for a number of reasons. One reason is that the advocacy of the oldline church-and-society curia (among, for example, Presbyterians USA, United Methodists, Episcopalians, and ELCA Lutherans) is not readily distinguishable from the positions advanced by, say, the editorial board of the *New York Times* or from the conventional wisdom in the

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faculty lounges of the nation's colleges and universities. In such elite centers of opinion and influence, what the oldline churches have to say is neither threatening nor very interesting. That was not always the case. Thirty and more years ago—with respect to civil rights, Vietnam, and various social agitations—religious activism was seen to play an important part in providing moral legitimation for movements of change. One thinks of groups such as the Fellowship of Reconciliation and Clergy and Laity Concerned About Vietnam, and about individuals such as the Berrigan brothers, William Sloane Coffin, and, in a category by himself, Martin Luther King, Jr. For anyone under forty, these are all names from the olden days.

It might be argued that one reason the religious left seems inconsequential, even nonexistent, is that the secular left no longer needs it. What in the 1960s was called "the long march through the institutions" has now been accomplished, and yesterday's revolutionaries have become, without changing their minds about much of importance, today's establishment. This new "correlation of forces" (as the Marxists used to say) should not be exaggerated. The long march has largely triumphed in the media, the universities, the big foundations, the liberal churches, and much of the business elite. Those are impressive conquests, to be sure, but even in those worlds the conquest is not total. And those worlds do not control our political culture, as is evident in the continuing ascendancy of conservatism in our public life. To speak of such an ascendancy assumes, of course, that the presidential election of 1992 was a fluke in which the winning candidate, although presenting himself as a conservative Democrat, received fewer votes than Michael Dukakis in 1988, and now appears to be anything but ascendant.

But back to religious activism and why we hear incessantly about the religious right but almost never about the religious left. In most political and cultural analyses, the religious left does not figure because it is no longer important to the establishmentarian left; it is superfluous. There is no felt need for its moral legitimation, if indeed it is capable of providing such. Thirty years ago, the editorial pages of the prestige media referred respectfully to pronouncements by, for example, the National Council of Churches. That simply does not happen today. Many editorialists are probably not aware that there is something called the National Council of Churches. As Stanley Rothman and others have suggested, that may be because of a growing indifference to religion among media elites. But one notes that the same elites are keenly aware of, hysterically aware of, the religious right. The religious left is still very much there, but it does not threaten and it does not offer anything that the culture elites view as substantively or strategically valuable. There are one or two exceptions. The homosexual movement, which is now securely ensconced in large sectors of the elite, does seek moral legitimation from the religious left in the form of ordaining active gays and blessing same-sex unions. And some liberal churches stil provide moral cover for the unlimited abortion license. Other exceptions do not come readily to mind.

In his insightful study *Representing God*, sociologist Allen Hertzke analyzes the ways in which churches of all varieties can be effective "mediating institutions" by giving their members a voice in the American polity, and also by interpreting public debates to their own constituencies. But on the most critical issue in our culture wars, namely abortion, there is an important disparity between left and right. Hertzke notes that conservative religious lobbies generally take a stronger pro-life position than their constituencies, while liberal lobbies are more strongly pro-choice than their supporters. The important disparity is this: conservative denominations represent their most active and most committed members in taking a strong pro-life position; liberal denominations, taking a strong pro-choice position, are representing the view of their least active and least committed members. American Baptists are pro-choice and Southern Baptists are pro-life, but an active American Baptist is more likely to be pro-life than a less active Southern Baptist. The same pattern holds for Catholics, Episcopalians, Pentecostals, Lutherans, and apparently everybody else. The crucial factor is *participation*; the more a church member is active and committed, the more likely that person will be pro-life. And the divide over abortion is far and away the most important defining line with respect to other agitated questions in our public life.

What is perceived as the growing influence of religion in our public life is probably real enough. But the perception is heightened by the fact that the religion getting attention is the religion that challenges the status quo, namely, the "religious right." Conservatives will continue to complain, and understandably so, that it is unfair for the media to keep on talking about the religious right while almost never mentioning the religious left. But the unfairness, if unfairness it be, will likely continue. For the reasons discussed above, in the view of those who shape the media story lines the religious left does not matter. It makes little or no substantive contribution in terms of ideas or moral legitimacy; and it has long since been evident that its constituency is typically the least committed of the churches most in decline. To paraphrase Stalin: How many divisions does the religious left have? Unlike Stalin's colossal misjudgment of the pope, that seems a reasonable question.

One might ask whether we have not reached a sorry state when religion is discussed in terms of divisions for fighting political and cultural wars.

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That is an excellent question, and the answer is that we have reached the sorry state when such discussion is inescapable. Robert Wuthnow of Princeton has carefully examined the ways in which the major church bodies are riddled through and through with the polarized politics of our society. The politicizing of religion and the religionizing of politics go hand in hand. One can understand the complaint that it was the liberals who started it: back in the 1960s, back in the modernist-fundamentalist controversies of the 1920s, back in the social gospel movement of the late nineteenth century. Now, the conservatives say, the religious left is discovering that two can play at the game of politics. And there does seem to be a kind of rough justice in that way of looking at matters. Rough justice and great danger.

Keeping Politics in its Place

Because politics is a function of culture and at the heart of culture is morality and at the heart of morality is religion, there is a necessary and unavoidable interaction between politics and religion. But the conflation of politics and religion is the death of authentic politics and the death of authentic religion. In the Christian account of things, politics deals with the penultimate, with proximate justice in a fallen world where we await the right ordering of all things in the genuinely new politics of the Kingdom Come. Faith attends to transcendent truth that encompasses and informs our earthly tasks, including politics, but can never be taken captive to such tasks. The conflation of politics and religion that results in religionized politics cannot help but seem threatening, not only to secularists but to Christians and Jews who understand the modesty and fragility of the political project. It cannot help but appear as "La Revanche de Dieu," a sword of vengeance wielded by those who presume to act as punishing angels of the Lord.

We have little doubt that the political influence of religion will come in for increasing attention in the years ahead. Alternative plausibility structures (as Peter Berger calls them) have collapsed or are collapsing. The comatose state of secular liberal theory will not likely be reversed by the desperate efforts of John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin, and their like. Secularists such as Richard Rorty and his friends have long been doing their ironic jig on liberalism's grave. And outside academic covens of impenetrable nostalgia, the quasi-religious worldview of Marxist socialism, once so uncritically embraced, is being forgotten with embarrassed haste. New ideologies will emerge, no doubt. As Orwell observed, there seems to be almost no limit to what intellectuals can invent to believe. But for the foreseeable future it seems to be the case, as it has not been the case for more than two hundred years, that the only plausibility structures left standing are religious. More precisely, religion—notably the Abrahamic faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—offer the only comprehensive belief systems that command the allegiance of hundreds of millions of people and propose, however confusedly, a direction toward the right ordering of the world.

This is not an unqualifiedly good thing, nor is it to say that religion is unchallenged. The challenges are legion and have many names: unfaith, bad faith, hedonism, hubris, and nihilism. In addition, a credible case can be made that technology and science have become quasi-religious belief systems that will, as Jacques Ellul and others have warned, undo the human project—and that sooner rather than later. And of course the ascendancy of religion is not an unqualifiedly good thing because religion, as a human enterprise, is as riddled with corruption and potential for evil as any other enterprise of sinful humanity. In some ways the dangers are greater with religion. Religion's invocation of absolute authority can excite fanaticism, and can exclude critical challenges just as rigorously as religion itself has frequently been excluded from public discourse in the modern era.

Although there is no way of avoiding that danger altogether, three observations are in order. First, the capacity for ideological craziness seems to be a permanent feature of the human condition. Second, the primary instances in the modern world of such craziness turning murderously mad have been fanatically antireligious in character, from the Great Terror of the French Revolution to Marxism-Leninism and Nazism in this century. Third, when religion degenerates into ideology—becoming a set of ideas in the service of political power—the resources for correction are found within religion itself. This is notably true of the prophetically self-critical tradition of the Bible and, in the Christian rendering of reality, of the cross as the definitive judgment upon earthly pretensions to power.

Cause of Freedom, Claims of Truth

So where does this leave us with respect to the widespread and growing anxiety about the political influence of religion? We cannot tell the anxious that there is nothing to worry about. There is a great deal to worry about in terms of the debasement of both religion and politics. Not only can we agree with the anxious that there is much to be anxious about, but we must caution enthusiastic religionists that their ascendancy cannot be unambiguously equated with the will of God and the advancement of the common good. At the same time, it is surely cause for thanksgiving that the great spasms of militant secularism seem to be exhausting themselves, at least for now. The third millennium portends a continuing resurgence of religion's public potency, especially in the case of Islam and Christianity. On

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the world scene, Islam is not monolithic. The trick is to nurture and encourage those Muslim developments that are compatible with and can even strengthen the achievements of democratic pluralism, achievements that owe a great debt to liberalism.

Elsewhere, the public resurgence of religion marks a new chapter in a very long Christian story of trying to figure out the right relationship between Church and culture, Christ and Caesar, the city of God and the city of man. There is no reason to assume that this or the next generation is going to get that relationship any more nearly correct than did the Christians at the time of Theodosius, Charlemagne, or Jonathan Edwards. When Jesus said His followers were to be in but not of the world He was proposing a conundrum that awaits eschatological resolution. Meanwhile, we have no choice but to work at getting it right, or at least at getting it less wrong than we often have in the past. Among Christians, it seems that the larger part of that work will have to be done by Catholics and evangelical Protestants. This is a reality boldly faced by the declaration "Evangelicals and Catholics Together," published in the May issue.

In this country, the pattern of "convergence and cooperation" affirmed in that declaration will continue to be referred to by some, with fear and loathing, as "the religious right." One hopes that more will come to recognize that the political reengagement of religiously inspired citizens and their call to greater moral reflectiveness about how we ought to live together is a sign of the rejuvenation of a democratic experiment returned to its founding presuppositions. "We hold these truths" was the beginning of the conversation that launched this experiment, and it should now be obvious to all that the experiment cannot be sustained by a secular liberalism that divorced the cause of freedom from the claims of truth. Those who now fear publicly resurgent religion will in time, one hopes, come to recognize that freedom grounded in moral truth provides a greater security for virtues cherished by old-fashioned liberals—openness, rationality, tolerance, and mutual respect. But that may take a long time.

Meanwhile, the culture war will be prosecuted, whether we like it or not. And the question of abortion—the question of who belongs to the community that is protected in law and life—will continue to be at the center of the many battles of the culture war. The more strident defenders of the status quo will continue to rail against the "religious right," and invoke the "separation of church and state," by which they mean the separation of religion and religiously based moral judgment from public life. One can predict with absolute certainty that there will continue to be excesses by religious activists that will warrant the most robust railing. But all things considered, the continuing resurgence of publicly potent religion seems all but inevitable. As aforesaid, that is not unqualifiedly good news; and we are well reminded that history is notorious for playing surprises both cruel and benign. If the culture war and the political influence of religion work out along the lines here suggested, however, one hopes that those who welcome and those who fear this development will come to recognize it not as the revenge but as the mercy of God.

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WE SUPERIOR FEW

"Radicals are the ones who first protest, liberals are the ones who join them when their protest has begun to be heard, and conservatives accept or at least live with what the liberals finally win." So far Joseph Fletcher, he of "situation ethics" fame, in a autobiographical sketch written shortly before his death in 1991. When he was young, he was "an ideologue and doctrinaire, which took shape in two guises, Socialist and Christian. The first to die out was the socialism, then the Christianity." What never died out was the smugness, although he does not put it quite that way.

Looking back on his contributions to biomedical ethics, he writes: "I have seen legal and medical triumphs for such 'radical' innovative practices as artificial insemination and inovulation, in vitro fertilization (test tube babies), genetic engineering, brain-death statutes, germ and embryo freezing, the patient's right to know, transsexualization, and DNA splitting and recombination. We have won the wars for voluntary abortion and sterilization and will soon have completed the roster of states with right-to-die laws. All these things and more, in both categories, were radical by definition and by general sentiment, and yet all of them have been won. Let it not be said that radicals are ineffective—only that they tend to pay a lot personally for what they gain, as liberals do not—at least comparatively."

Not, in fact, that Mr. Fletcher, a comfortably ensconced Episcopalian clergyman (which he remained to the end of his life, long after his Christianity "died out") and tenured professor at the University of Virginia, ever had to pay that much for his radicalism. Of his life he writes: "It was good, all of it. I knew many people, of all kinds and stations, in many parts of the world; had an exciting intellectual life, a superb family; lived in pleasant homes almost always, some of them beautiful; and our children had the great advantage of top-grade schooling and friends."

The above is from *Joseph Fletcher: Memoir of an*

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Ex-Radical, a new book of essays in appreciation of Fletcher edited by Kenneth Vaux and issued by Westminster/John Knox Press. Fletcher's putative achievements in biomedical ethics are by no means so secure as he assumed. And, far from having the courage to be radical, his life's work was one of going with the flow of technological ambition and moral permissiveness. His autobiographical reflection confirms the impression of an affably arrogant man who was born to a life of privilege and security and never had the wit to recognize that he had cast his lot with the barbarians who were willing to make him a minor celebrity in exchange for lending his prestige to their project of destroying the world from which he so richly benefited. May God have mercy on his soul.

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PROTESTANTISM THEN AND NOW

"Traditional Protestantism lived off of the Catholic elements in its own reality; its bishops stood in historical connection with the bishops of the Catholic age; its liturgical worship kept close to the Roman mass; its confessions reaffirmed the dogmatic truths of the ecumenical councils, and claimed to be teaching nothing new; it emphatically rejected heresies old and new." That was then and this is now, says Carl Braaten, director of the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology in Northfield, Minnesota. Writing in *Lutheran Forum,* Braaten says that Dietrich Bonhoeffer got it right in the 1930s when he observed that Protestantism in America had never experienced the Reformation. "It has been given to Americans less than any other people in the world to achieve the visible unity of the church of God on earth," Bonhoeffer wrote. "It has been given to Americans more than any other people in the world to manifest a pluralism of Christian beliefs and denominations."

"Anything (or almost anything) goes" has long been the motto of American Protestantism, according to Bonhoeffer and Braaten. Harold Bloom got a large part of it right, says Braaten, when he wrote in *The American Religion* (1992) that the religion of Americans has been historically and is today gnosticism. Against tradition, canon, communal structure, or anything that looks like external authority, the gnostic follows his real or imagined star, believing that "at the apex of every human soul there exists a spark of the light of God." In the past, says Braaten, the ravages of gnosticism were held in check by denominational institutions and habits that were recognized as being more or less authoritative, plus an engrained sense of accountability to Scripture and historical orthodoxy. Not now. What is to be done? Some, Braaten says, will take the road to Rome or Orthodoxy. Some might try to reconstitute a traditional Protestantism by defining themselves, in the mode of the sixteenth century, in opposition to Catholicism. But after Vatican II, he suggests, that makes no theological sense. Braaten does have a proposal:

"We may look for paths of renewal that move through and across the denominations, working for a common future in which Christians and churches will visibly confess the one apostolic faith in one eucharistic fellowship. We will be wise to look for allies wherever we can find them, and not go fishing only in Lutheran fjords. This is an ecumenical road, and as such not a new one, but one whose plausibility and relevance are seriously being questioned by those taking other roads. Whether one is Lutheran, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or Methodist or something else does not matter much in terms of the current struggle for the basic biblical contents of faith, the authority of dogma and confession, and fidelity to the Gospel in eucharistic fellowship. While the ecclesial substance of the Protestant denominations is dissolving into the poisoned gruel of the American Religion, whether on the fundamentalist right or the progressivist left, there are struggle groups within each dedicated to the renewal of the Evangelical and Catholic elements inherent in the originating impulses of the various Protestant traditions. There may have been some wild reformers who intended to start a Bible church without catholic substance, but Luther, Calvin, and Wesley were not among them. Nevertheless, in all the churches that bear their stamp, there has been a diminution of catholic substance and orthodox doctrine coupled with a syncretistic amalgamation of neo-pagan elements."

In their article, "Mainline Churches: The Real Reason for Decline" (FT, March 1993), Benton Johnson and colleagues made a compelling case that the heart of the crisis is the failure to transmit the faith in a way that elicits the allegiance of the successor generation. Braaten agrees with the sociological analysis of Johnson et al., but focuses attention on the fact that there is no shared understanding of what is the faith that is to be transmitted. The crisis of Protestantism is a perennial topic, and it is always in order to caution against crisis-mongering. But from the modernist controversies of the early part of this century, through the analyses of such as H. Richard Niebuhr and Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the 1930s, up to the likes of Bloom and Braaten today, there is a continuum of reflection on a Protestantism that has apparently lost its reason for being. This has been going on for almost a century now. There was a brief break, a

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resurgence of theological confidence and excitement, represented by Reinhold Niebuhr and, most notably, by Karl Barth. But that was decades ago and now looks like no more than a momentary deviance from the theme of decline and dissolution.

Of course in all the oldline liberal denominations one can find congregations that are enclaves of vibrant faith and life in earnest conversation with orthodox Christianity. Then too, the sundry liberationisms from authority that Braaten and others deplore undoubtedly do provide spiritual excitements for many people. But such a diverse religious marketplace merely confirms Harold Bloom's observations about gnosticism and Bonhoeffer's doleful reflections about degenerate pluralism. To be sure, there are evangelical and fundamentalist Protestants who believe that they are not embroiled in the crisis because the old-time religion is secured by a nineteenth-century Protestant dogma of biblical inerrancy. That way is not available to the communities that chiefly concern Braaten. There is a problem with scriptural authority but, agreeing with New Testament scholar Martin Kähler, Braaten insists that it cannot be resolved without addressing the question of the Church. He writes:

"Another matter of high priority must be the recovery of the authority of Scripture. The teaching of the Bible in theological schools is in the grip of gnosticism, the belief that it is necessary to appeal away from the plain sense of Scripture to a higher knowledge that lies above or behind the text. The aim of biblical studies is to put students 'in the know' so that they will be privy to an esoteric knowledge that even most intelligent and educated folks cannot get from their reading of the Scriptures in Hebrew, Greek, or English. The effect is paralysis on those not privy to this higher knowledge. The newly initiated are in bondage to their masters and cite their authority. Often their opinions stand in stark opposition to the biblical foundations of the classical dogmatics of the church, whether in their witness to the triune God, the Divine-Human Person of Jesus Christ, and so forth.

"The result is an 'ugly broad ditch' (Lessing) between dogmatics that teaches what the church believes (*lex orandi lex credendi)* and exegesis that is obedient to the 'papacy of sophisticated scholarship' (Martin Kähler). A deep hiatus runs through every seminary curriculum, as every somewhat alert student will discover in short order. The authority of the Bible is not autonomous. When people cease to believe in the church, they will soon cease to believe in the church's Book. We can hardly imagine that the huge hiatus between exegesis and dogmatics will give way to a greater unity of theology until the divided churches resolve their differences into a greater unity of the church. For the Bible by itself, as Ernst Käsemann said, can be invoked to support a multiplicity of confessions. If the Bible as a whole and in all its parts is not also read backwards in light of the Holy Spirit at work in the early catholic church and subsequently, the Bible will have no more authority than any other primitive document from antiquity."

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Pluralism and Wrong Answers

Because the U.S. Census does not ask about religion, we must rely upon other sources to know how Americans identify themselves religiously. Especially valuable in this connection was a nationwide survey conducted by the City University of New York, the results of which are now brought together in *One Nation Under God: Religion in Contemporary American Society* by Barry A. Kosman and Seymour P. Lachman (Harmony). One reason commonly given for the exclusion or muting of religion in our public life is that we are now a "pluralistic" society in which it cannot be assumed that, for instance, the Judeo-Christian ethic is broadly shared. The Kosman-Lachman findings make complete hash of that contention, and it is worth noting that their findings are confirmed by Gallup and other studies.

Statistically at least, America is as much a Christian nation as it ever was, and perhaps more so. Of all Americans, 86.2 percent identify themselves as Christian, with all but 14 percent of those claiming to belong to a specific denomination. Jews are 1.8 percent, which is moved up to 2.2 percent if one counts those who say they are cultural or ethnic, but not religious, Jews. All the other religions put together (Muslim, Unitarian, Buddhist, Hindu, Native American, Sikh, etc.) account for 1.5 percent of the population, while 8.2 percent of Americans say they have no religion. According to these studies, there are 1.5 million Muslims, with 40 percent of them being native black Americans.

The allegedly "exploding" Muslim population is frequently cited by those who contend for the religio-cultural balkanization of America. Muslim organizations claim figures as high as seven million, and these claims are often cited in news stories. For perfectly understandable reasons, minority groups tend to inflate their figures, a relatively innocent vice except when it plays into the hands of those with a more dubious agenda. In this case the dubious agenda is to relegate Christian views to a marginal status in public discourse. Of course many

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Christians are no more than nominal, and of course there is no one view held by Christians on a host of disputed questions, and of course a hundred other important qualifications. But one of the most elementary facts about America is that its people are overwhelmingly Christian in their own understanding, and that they and many who are not Christian assume that the moral baseline of the society is the Judeo-Christian ethic. Acknowledging that does not answer the many questions that vex our public life, but to ignore it is a guaranteed formula for getting the wrong answers.

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QUESTIONS HARD AND SOFT

It seems a long time ago that political theorists and policy wonks confidently declared that the hard realities of social behavior were economic and power relationships, while things such as culture, values, beliefs, and communal ties were soft and squishy. That simply reflects the fact that the harder questions, the questions we find it hard to deal with, we dismiss as soft, while those matters that we can more easily count and control we call hard. Actually, it wasn't that long ago that public policy types were still playing that trick. Some readers will no doubt remember the slogan of the Clinton campaign in 1992, "It's the economy, stupid." Few things now sound more stupid when the economy is more or less in order while the Clinton Administration is awash in questions of character, values, and cultural conflict. All those soft questions that are *really* hard.

The Brookings Institute has brought out *Values and Public Policy* (edited by Henry J. Aaron et al.), and a fine book it is. But it is a little cloying to have Brookings congratulating itself on the discovery that, outside the public policy and academic elites, there is a real America where values matter. It is good that Brookings has caught up, but they are playing catch-up to Heritage and other think tanks that long since discovered the facts of life that most Americans had taken for granted all along. But this is no time to be churlish. *Values and Public Policy* has a number of excellent essays, notably those by James Q. Wilson on the underclass, David Popenoe on the family, and Nathan Glazer on multiculturalism. (Although between Glazer and Arthur Schlesinger on multiculturalism in the schools, Schlesinger does seem to see the dangers more acutely.)

Wilson emerges from his stunningly detailed study of the evidence with some definite conclusions about what ought to be done. "Our object ought to be to increase the number of urban young men who marry and remain married. Of all the institutions through which people may pass—schools, employers, the military—marriage has the largest effect. For every race and at every age, married men live longer than unmarried men and have lower rates of homicide, suicide, accidents, and mental illness. Crime rates are lower for married than unmarried men and incomes are higher. It is less likely for drug dealers to be married than for young men who are not dealers. Infant mortality rates are higher for unmarried than for married women, whether black or white, and these differences cannot be explained by differences in income or availability of medical care. So substantial is this difference that an unmarried woman with a college education is more likely to have her infant die than is a married woman with less than a high school education."

"Something must be done about this," responds the concerned citizen, echoing the *New York Times* editorial page, both having in mind some new government program backed by substantial funding to demonstrate that we're serious. Not so fast, says Wilson: "The federal government is a powerful but clumsy giant, not very adept at identifying, evaluating, and encouraging individuals who need help. It is good at passing laws, transferring funds, and multiplying regulations. These are necessary functions, but out of place in the realm of personal redemption. A government program to foster personal redemption will come equipped with standardized budgets, buy-America rules, minority set-asides, quarterly reporting requirements, and environmental impact statements and, in all likelihood, a thinly disguised bias against any kind of involvement with churches. There may be a better way: public funds sent to private foundations that in turn do the identifying, evaluating, and encouraging, all on the basis of carefully negotiated charters that free these intermediaries from most governmental constraints. I have no example to cite, but people who wish to think seriously about changing the culture of poverty had better start inventing one."

In fact, we think there are examples to cite, but that's for another day. Today it is sufficient to welcome the Brookings Institute to the culture wars, and to warmly recommend *Values and Public Policy*.

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Getting Real About Welfare

Sometimes it is called the cold turkey approach to welfare reform, and most commentators dismissed it as entirely too draconian. In recent months, however, Charles Murray has made remarkable headway in persuading people to look again at what he calls the single most important problem facing the country—out of wedlock births. One reason the climate has changed is that Murray has effectively emphasized that the problem is by no means limited to the urban, mostly black, underclass. In that sector of the population, the incidence of babies being born without the father accepting responsibility for the child is now above 80 percent of all births (for the black population as a whole, including middle class blacks, it is above 60 percent). Murray has caught attention by pointing out that there has also been a dramatic increase in white illegitimacy. The incidence of white women, mainly very young women, giving birth to children out of wedlock is now about what it was for black women thirty years ago. At the rate things are going, according to the Murray argument, the social and moral disaster of the urban underclass will in the foreseeable future become the social and moral disaster of American society as such.

The Murray analysis—if not the Murray prescription for dealing with the problem—is now widely accepted. Even the Clinton Administration is speaking in tones of urgency about the need to reduce teenage pregnancy and out of wedlock births. Of course some who talk that way have nothing more in mind than expanding sex education, handing out condoms, and encouraging girls to have abortions. The Murray prescription follows from the Murray analysis. The reason so many girls have been having babies on their own over the last decades is that it seems so easy, even attractive, to have a baby on your own. The welfare system is so designed as to encourage the practice. Young girls are understandably attracted to the idea of being independent, being given an apartment and income of their own, and having a baby to love and be loved by. All of this is made possible by AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children), food stamps, medicaid, and related welfare benefits.

Only a little while ago, talk about out of wedlock births as a problem was condemned as "blaming the victim." The chattering classes actually seemed enamored of the phenomenon, viewing it as another instance of the welcome emergence of "alternative forms of family." That has changed in the last couple of years in the light of studies—confirming commonsensical expectations—that the consequences of fatherlessness are catastrophic for children. Not for all children without fathers, of course, but the chances are greatly multiplied that fatherless children will end up with lives marred by educational failure, unemployment and unemployability, drug addiction, and criminal behavior. Those with lives so marred have a strong tendency to mar the lives of others. At an early age the boys also become fathers of other fatherless children who repeat the same dismal cycle. There is now broad agreement on this general picture. As First Things author Barbara Dafoe Whitehead wrote last year in the *Atlantic*, "Dan Quayle Was Right," and those who had vilified Quayle for his comments on Murphy Brown and her baby nodded their heads in assent (without, for the most part, acknowledging that, if Dan Quayle was right, they were dead wrong).

The Murray prescription is to take away the incentives for irresponsibly bringing children into the world, and to replace them with powerful disincentives. More precisely, he proposes the elimination of welfare support for single mothers with children. The proposal has the charm of simplicity. On a given day it would be announced that nine months and a day from now there will be no AFDC for single women having a baby. There would be a grandmother clause, so to speak, for women and children already dependent on welfare, and provisions for extraordinary circumstances at the edges. But the basic proposition is unmistakably clear: If you have a baby that you can't support, the government is not going support it for you; no free apartment, no income. In such a new dispensation, it is suggested, parents, families, churches, and others would have every reason to discourage children from having children. It might even bring back the legendary shotgun as an inducement for young men to marry the girls whom they "get in a family way." Put differently, the government would withdraw the welfare incentive and leave it to families and communities to supply the informal disincentives that, in combination, would dramatically reduce the incidence of young women having babies that they cannot support.

A very major obstacle to this proposal is that some of its proponents seem all too relaxed about the prospect that it would increase the number of abortions. There is no reason, however, to assume that an increase in abortions is either necessary or probable. The proposal imaginatively designed and presented could change attitudes not only toward having babies but also toward sexual behavior (the two are, to all but some intellectuals, inseparably related). The desired change is from sex understood in terms of recreation and kicks to sex understood in terms of responsibility and consequences.

No reform is likely to affect the desire of young men to copulate with young women. Women, however, can be given support in saying no. Under

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the present welfare system, she asks, "What if I get pregnant?" He says, "Maybe I'll marry you and support the baby. If not, you can have the baby, go on welfare, and get your own apartment. Or you can have an abortion." Under the proposed reform, the answer is very different. It's either marrying her or getting an abortion. Or maybe her family will be willing to help raise the baby, but maybe not. Or she can have the baby and place it for adoption, but nobody gets pregnant with that in mind. And maybe she doesn't want to marry the fellow, or doesn't trust his promise to marry her. In this significantly more difficult circumstance, the alternative that is positively attractive to many girls—having a baby, an apartment, and a guaranteed income from the state—is simply not available. The effect of the Murray proposal is to create strong reasons against irresponsibly bringing babies into the world, and strong reasons against getting pregnant outside of marriage.

In considering whether the Murray proposal would increase or decrease the number of abortions, one takes into account that most people think that having an abortion is a very wrong thing to do—women somewhat more than men, and black women somewhat more than white women. (See the relevant data in James D. Hunter's *Before the Shooting Begins.)* Such women may have an abortion in circumstances that they define as a crisis, but they still think that it is awfully wrong, that it is tantamount to murder. "What happens if I get pregnant?" she asks. If the only believable answer is that she can get an abortion, she is given a very strong reason for saying no to the importunate young man. In sum, the possible result of the Murray proposal is less casual sexual intercourse, fewer out of wedlock pregnancies, fewer abortions, and, just maybe, more marriages. As aforesaid, the desired move is from the sex of recreation and kicks to the sex of responsibility and consequences.

Three things we know. First, public policy proposals are notoriously vulnerable to the law of unintended consequences. We know that we do not know what would happen were it announced that AFDC assistance would be ended at a date definite. Second, the Murray proposal is not going to get very far if it is tied to the acceptance of more abortions. The attitude of liberals to Murray's ideas ranges from suspicion to rage, while conservative support is by no means as strong as conservative opposition to abortion. Third, the analysis and proposals advanced by Charles Murray are deserving of the most careful attention. The present welfare situation, with all the tragedy of blighted lives for young women and their children, is not inevitable. It was not always this way and it need not continue this way. It was not this way thirty years ago. Something happened, and it happened in part because of well-intended but dumb welfare policies. The present reality of more than 80 percent of the children of the urban underclass being born to single mothers is morally intolerable. A future with 50 percent or more of all American children born to single mothers would be socially and economically unsustainable. These are the grim facts to be faced by those who are ready to get real about welfare reform.

FT

SHUL, STATE, AND THE PRICE OF BEING DIFFERENT

Only in New York. When the Grand Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson was around the corner from us at Beth Israel Hospital and on a respirator, the *Daily News* had a story headlined, "State to provide counseling if rebbe dies." The "if" is not unimportant, for the ninety-two-year-old rebbe did not discourage hopes that he was the Messiah or Moshiach. Cruising the neighborhood those days were "Moshiach Tanks," mobile homes bearing the sign, "Your Center for Information on Immediate Arrival of Moshiach," and broadcasting tapes of the rebbe's teaching. The Lubavitcher Hasidim led by the rebbe are based across the river in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, but on the night of his ninety-second birthday thousands gathered in a park next to the hospital here. The men and boys in fur hats, broad-brimmed felt hats, long black coats, flowing beards, and other eighteenth-century fashions favored by the Hasidim made an impressive spectacle.

That the state had a program of grief therapy to deal with the rebbe's death is not surprising. It may seem like the ultimate pretension of the nanny state for it to think it is required to console a community of religious believers, but that is to miss the point. The Lubavitcher community is a very big political player in the state and the city, as well as in Israel. The Grand Rebbe commanded a voting bloc to which Mayor Giuliani owed his election, and it is not incidental that Governor Cuomo is running again this year. The state's grief program, called "Operation Survival," was run by psychiatrists and other therapists, including rabbis, approved by the Lubavitchers. In effect the community was consoling itself, but the consolation was funded by the state. It has long been understood in New York that the Lubavitchers have a plenary dispensation from church-state law in their relationship to government. What the Grand Rebbe wanted the Grand Rebbe got, more or less, but mainly more. Forgetting that fact of political life in New York made David Dinkins a

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candidate for grief therapy. All in all, it is a pretty sensible arrangement, although not one that can be recommended for general application. Certainly it is much more sensible than the extremism of church-state separationists who think it the duty of government to ride roughshod over what is viewed as the inconvenience of religion.

Not that the state is always so accommodating. Consider the Kiryas Joel school district and its case now before the Supreme Court. The Hasidim of the village of Kiryas Joel have the misfortune, at least in this instance, of being Satmar rather than Lubavitcher, and of being upstate where they established their village in 1977. Their mode is one of withdrawal from the world, and they pay a price in diminished political clout. Some years ago they did get the state to let them have their own school district for purposes of receiving state aid for their disabled children. Nobody claims that they are using state funds for religious education, but the complaint is made that everything, absolutely everything, those Satmars do is influenced by their religion. That complaint is no doubt justified. Wouldn't it be nice if the same complaint could be made about, for instance, Catholics or Methodists? In any event, the usual suspects have brought suit alleging that the Kiryas Joel school arrangement violates the separation of church and state (in this case, shul and state).

Nathan Lewin, the Washington attorney leading the case for Kiryas Joel, offers some cogent observations on the argument of his opponents. "The respondents and their *amici* have not, however, suggested that a geographic area populated overwhelmingly by Methodists, Baptists, Mormons, Episcopalians, or Catholics is constitutionally disabled from providing local municipal services. Indeed, it appears that even if a town's residents were overwhelmingly or entirely Jewish in their religious affiliation, few of the *amici* would raise an eyebrow over their right to elect a sheriff or vote for a school board. It is crystal-clear from the briefs of our adversaries, however, that this case is different only because the population of Kiryas Joel takes its religion *seriously*. Kiryas Joel's residents are not just Jews. They are Jews who believe that, in various respects, they are required by divine command to live as their Jewish ancestors did centuries ago. A citizenry that is as totally committed to its faith and religious observances as are the Satmar Hasidim cannot, our adversaries contend, be trusted to exercise the secular power of self-governance that may be enjoyed by other American citizens."

Once again, it seems, the free exercise of religion, originally privileged in constitutional law, is now penalized. Are the Satmars of Kiryas Joel hurting anyone? It seems not. By all reports, they are industrious and law-abiding citizens. They are taking care of their own, and receiving from the state only the aid given to other communities. The problem is that their community is different, and that their difference is religious in nature. The National Education Association, which has submitted one of the most strident amicus briefs against Kiryas Joel, cannot abide an exception to its secular monopoly on public funds for education. Difference cannot be tolerated and, if the difference is religious in nature, it can be legally squelched; all this, of course, under the auspices of the liberal doctrine of pluralism. In this twisted doctrine of pluralism, it is required that everybody be alike. The Satmar Jews sin against pluralism by being exclusively Satmar Jews. If they were to be "inclusive" and dilute their identity as Satmars, then we would presumably have a more pluralistic society. No, dear reader, there is nothing wrong with your head; it really does make no sense.

We note with satisfaction that Catholic and Protestant groups have submitted amicus briefs in strong support of Kiryas Joel. The Lubavitchers and Satmars do not loom large on the national scene, but church-state law has typically been decided, for better and for worse, at the societal margins. And eternal vigilance, as the venerable founder might have said, is the price to be paid for keeping the separationist extremists at bay. We need to keep working at it, knowing full well that the tensions between the disputed sovereignties of church and state will not be satisfactorily resolved until Moshiach comes—or, as some of us are persuaded, comes again.

FT

Virtue Rewarded, Occasionally

Michael Novak has won the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. Being a bit ahead of the curve (although we knew nothing about this award), we offered an extensive tribute to Novak's achievements some months ago ("The Novak Achievement," Public Square, October 1993). The Templeton Prize, which is accompanied by about one million dollars, is an additional sign of vindication for a thinker who has for the last two decades courageously worked against the grain in advancing the argument for democratic capitalism. The Prize, now in its twenty-third year, has previously been awarded to, among others, Mother Teresa, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Billy Graham, and Charles Colson. While this sign of vindication is no doubt important to Novak, more important was the embrace of some of his key

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arguments in the 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus*.

Although Novak's critics have tried hard to obscure the fact, the burden of his argument, beginning with *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* in 1982, is that the poor need to be more fully included within the circle of productivity and exchange that is the free market. Also in this respect, he is reinforcing the insistence of John Paul II in *Centesimus Annus* that capitalism as actually practiced must be made morally accountable to all whom it affects. After the ignominious failure of all the socialisms that have been tried, perhaps the air will soon clear, making possible some fresh thinking about the connections between culture, politics, and economics. The optimal way of making those connections Novak calls democratic capitalism. When our academic and media mandarins do finally come out of the hangover induced by their socialist indulgence, they could do a lot worse than start to get their bearings by examining Novak's proposal.

FT

The Silent Streets of Boston

Boston did not have one; New York did. The Massachusetts high court ruled that gays and lesbians had a right to march as a group in the St. Patrick's Day Parade. Rather than conform to the ruling, the sponsors decided there would be no parade for the first time in more than ninety years. Last year in New York, gay organizations, supported by former mayor David Dinkins, tried to get a similar ruling but the court went the other way, deciding that the parade was not a public (i.e., government) activity and the sponsors had First Amendment rights to determine the message of their own parade. The New York parade this year was a rousing, raucous success. Reportedly, a substantial number of people came down from Boston for the festivities they had been denied at home.

The brouhaha over St. Patrick's will strike many as a small thing, but there are larger concerns engaged—about the meaning of "public" and about the strategies of minority representation. In both Boston and New York, homosexual activists claimed that homosexuals have traditionally been excluded from the parades. But of course that cannot be right. Almost as certain as anything can be, given the incidence of homosexuality in society, many homosexuals have marched on St. Patrick's Day over the years. But they marched as part of groups that were celebrating what the parade is intended to celebrate. The interesting claim now is that the sponsors of the parade must include their corporate celebration of the homosexual lifestyle, which they, along with the sponsors and participants, acknowledge is alien to the stated purpose of the St. Patrick's Day Parade. The logic is that, if I disagree with the purpose of your parade, you are obliged to parade my disagreement. Since a parade is obviously an expression of what people want to express, this is pretty close to contending that, if I disagree with what you are saying, you are obliged to articulate my disagreement, or else shut up.

Those who disagree with the message that the parade intends to communicate can stand on the sidewalk and hold up signs declaring, for instance, "I think your parade stinks!" That point was made by a Hibernian parade sponsor on a television news show, to which the response was: "Yes, but such protestors would face hostility from the crowds. Gays need the protection of being in the parade itself." So, if you parade for a particular purpose, and the parade attracts crowds who are enthusiastic about that purpose, your parade must include those who oppose that purpose. By this way of thinking, if it is truly inclusive, your parade will have no purpose; or at least it will have no purpose with which any group of political consequence might disagree—which is another way of saying that it will have no purpose.

The purpose of a St. Patrick's parade does not include saying anything about homosexuality except in the indirect sense that it aims to support a Catholic heritage that is critical of homosexual acts, along with adultery, theft, racism, gluttony, and a host of other behaviors to which human beings are prone. The parade, its sponsors insist, is not about sexuality. Just as adamantly, the gay activists insist that "the personal is the political" and therefore everything is about sexuality, and to pretend that something is not about sexuality is in fact to support the repressive heterosexual hegemony. This all gets terribly convoluted. Christians are accused of being obsessed with sexuality, and with homosexuality in particular. That hardly seems to be the case. Most would just as soon drop the subject, or not pick it up in the first place. Nobody thought the St. Patrick's Day Parade had anything to do with sexuality, never mind homosexuality, until homosexual activists asserted that it has everything to do with sexuality because it had nothing to do with sexuality. That a Massachusetts court succumbed to this line of illogic is not entirely surprising. Otherwise healthy minds in the academy, the media, and the several churches have not survived the test any better.

The editorial writers of the *New York Times* think they have a way out of all this. Of course they believe the Massachusetts court was right and the New York court was wrong. The New York parade is morally "stained," they say, because the Irish Lesbian and

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Gay Organization (ILGO) is not allowed to demonstrate in the parade. Mayor Rudolph Giuliani decided to march in the parade and thereby, according to the *Times*, sent "a divisive, needlessly cruel message." He should not march in a parade that "denigrates part of the city," but, if he does, the editorialists have a suggestion: "Mr. Giuliani needs to distance himself from this benighted display of bigotry. If he cannot do that, then since he attends all parades, let him also visit the gay group's counter-parade." In other words, a measure of evenhandedness is achieved if the mayor also marches in a parade that is organized to protest the parade in which he is going to march. Civility is presumably to be found midway between conflicting moral condemnations. Maybe the way to be mayor of all the people is to go to the gay parade and shout "Bigot!" at the St. Pat's Parade, and then move over to the St. Pat's Parade and shout "Queer!" at the gays. But of course the symmetry does not hold, for in this case nobody is shouting except the homosexual activists and the *Times*.

Boston and New York, like most major cities, also have gay pride parades. The suggestion is made that those who are unhappy with the disruption of St. Patrick's festivities should get back by insisting that they be allowed to march in those parades carrying signs such as "Straight is Great!" That is a perfectly dumb idea that can only exacerbate the politicizing and polarizing of everything. Gay pride parades are probably with us for the foreseeable future. Most Americans avert their eyes in embarrassment, or view them as occasion for jokes, usually on the smutty side. The general attitude is one of letting these people do their thing so long as, to paraphrase the Victorian lady, they do not frighten the horses excessively. That is quite possibly the attitude also of most homosexuals, who want only to be left alone and are mortified by the adolescent antics of the self-designated "queers" of gay activism.

What frightens fair-minded people who care about our common life is the way in which the courts are used to "privilege" the expression of one difference (e.g., homosexuality) in order to undermine the expression of others (e.g., Irish Catholic heritage). Rights are pitted against rights, the one cancelling the other. And of course all this is done to advance a distorted doctrine of diversity and pluralism that destroys diversity and pluralism—a doctrine to which the silent streets of Boston bore doleful witness this St. Patrick's Day.

FT

WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ There is an army of used-to-be Catholic writers who wistfully wish in print that they could still be part of the color and vitalities of Catholic life, but they have, alas, outgrown that sort of thing. Graham Greene exemplified the tradition that has now declined to the likes of Mary Gordon. Barbara Grizzuti Harrison joins the camp with her "Arguing with the Pope" in the April issue of *Harper's*. She covers the World Youth Day in Denver and finds much to praise, if only the Pope didn't hold to those terribly outdated notions about sex and such. (Actually, there's no "and such"; it's all sex that seems to bother her.) She tells us that while flying back to New York from Denver she struggled to understand the connection between sex and the Incarnation. Then this, as though it follows naturally: "While aboard Shepherd One, the Pope enjoyed a choice of roasted veal, beef tenderloin pignoli, chervil chicken, salmon with linguine, caviar, Godiva chocolates, and Haagen-Dazs, resting in a custom-made curtained bed that took the space of four seats on the 767 plane." Perhaps she means to suggest that her struggles over sex might have been eased had the food on her flight been better. The more probable reading is a criticism of the Pope who has the luxury of both easy answers on sex and special privileges on airplanes. In truth, Harrison has the easy answer on sex, which is that sex should be easy, and her struggle is over the fact that it isn't. Regarding the Pope's airplane accommodations, anyone who has ever flown business class knows about those fancy menus they hand out. Whichever choice you make inevitably demonstrates the truth of the adage that airplane food is to food what military music is to music. Then there is the bed. So a seventy-four-year-old man after the grinding schedule of his visits here and there should sit for nine hours in coach surrounded by a pack of barbaric reporters such as Barbara Grizzuti Harrison? "Yes," a friend to whom we mentioned this objected, "but would Jesus fly first class?" Would Jesus ask a dumb question like that? Would Jesus write for *Harper's* ? Would Jesus be as wearied as is your editor with the feather-brained poseurs of moral struggle? As for Ms. Harrison, confessions are at noon, five p.m., and by appointment.

■ The *Lancet* is the premier journal of the British medical establishment and in it an R. V. Short discusses the shattering experience of teaching medical students who just won't learn. At the beginning of a course with 150 students he handed out a questionnaire and discovered that 27 percent thought that Charles Darwin was wrong about our having evolved from an African ape-like ancestor and fully 54 percent thought there was life after death. In order to clear their minds of such nonsense,

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Short loaded the course with required readings of evolutionary doctrine. At the end of the course he used the same questionnaire to see how many minds had been cured. "To my utter dismay, there were no statistically significant changes in any of the answers to any of the questions. I was shattered. I believe in the truth of evolution and still regard it as the most exciting fundamental concept. . . . So why had I failed in my efforts to teach the concept to my students? Is the scientific evidence on the origins of mankind now so overwhelming that failure to believe is no longer acceptable, or are we dealing with fundamental concepts of life and death that are emotional and irrational and hence beyond the reach of scientific logic? At best, perhaps I have sown a few seeds of truth that will take time to germinate. At worst, maybe I should retire from teaching." It is the shattering experience all too well known by the commissars and inquisitors of the one true faith. At best, R. V. Short might rethink the dogmas to which he is bound. At second best, retire.

■ RU-486, the "abortion pill," turns out to be not what it was cracked up to be. Still banned in this country because pharmaceutical companies fear boycotts by pro-lifers and, perhaps even more, the threat of lawsuits over unknown side-effects, some Americans are going to Britain for RU-486 abortions. According to the *New York Times*, the experience is harrowing. It involves long periods in bed, repeated clinic visits, and excruciating labor pains of six hours or more to expel the fetus. Nonetheless, one woman who could have obtained an easier abortion in Philadelphia thought the RU-486 ordeal had "psychological advantages." She explained, "I didn't want to just zip in and be put to sleep and zip out in two hours with it all done. In a way, that would have been too easy. This was a big painful decision for me. I would have felt irresponsible if it had just been over with like that. I wanted to remember this all my life. I never want to do it again." One recognizes a moral sensibility there, however perverse. She seems to believe that it is necessary to make atonement by suffering for having done something very wrong. Another young woman from Boston explains her choice of an RU-486 abortion this way: "It was worth it to me because I couldn't bear the thought of a doctor going in and tearing something out of my body. It's such a violent intrusive act. This felt more natural. My body did all the work." The assumed moral status of what is "natural" is intriguing. For a long time people have been celebrating natural child birth. Now we have natural child killing.

■ In a speech observing the 150th anniversary of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Archbishop Rembert Weakland urged Catholics to take a more sympathetic tack toward feminism. According to the *Milwaukee Journal*, "He compared feminism to some scientific discoveries, such as those made by Galileo and Darwin." Weakland said, "I would hope that we could avoid forever the term 'radical feminism.' I'm not quite sure I know what it means but if anybody wants to use a derogatory term, that's the one they throw out." He said "Christian feminism must be biblical, gender inclusive, and culturally inclusive, in solidarity with the weakest in society, and ecologically sensitive." Let's see, have we left anything out? John Martin Henni, the first bishop of Milwaukee, would no doubt have been amazed to see what the diocese has come to in just 150 years.

■ Deploring the few favorable presentations of homosexuality in children's books, Michael Thomas Ford writes in *Publishers Weekly* that a double standard is at work. He quotes an editor who complains that discussions of homosexuality automatically focus on the bedroom. "When you say 'heterosexual,' people do not automatically think in terms of sex. When you say 'homosexual,' suddenly everything turns automatically to sex. But children are not thinking about sex—adults are." It seems there is a bundle of confusions there. First, you only say "heterosexual" in order to distinguish from "homosexual." Second, "homosexual" (as in "gay") is precisely, exclusively, and inescapably about sex acts. The doing of certain things sexually is what distinguishes homosexuals from other people. As gays are always telling us, in every other respect they are just like everybody else. Third, what is the point of favorably presenting homosexuals in children's books if not to get children to think about what it means to be homosexual, namely sex? Mr. Ford, it says here, is currently working on a book about the lives of gay and lesbian teenagers. Without reference to the bedroom, presumably.

■ "Religious Right's New Crusade: Crucify Health Care Reform." That's the heading in the *New York Observer* for Joe Conason's column favoring the government takeover of the medical system. He concludes: "In its alliance with the insurance industry and the Republican protectors of big business, the Religious Right seeks to reward only the health care profiteers. Apparently, its Scripture-spouting leaders have forgotten the gospels: Jesus healed the sick—and he did it for free." Not to mention His multiplication of the food supply. There is something bracingly straightforward about Mr. Conason's casting of the state in the role of Messiah.

■ The British Secretary of State for the Environment, John Gummer, thought he owed his friend George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, an explanation when he joined the many notable figures who are leaving the Church of England to become Roman Catholic. Gummer expressed his love for the C of E

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and concluded, "I will not disguise my sadness in leaving nor the joy which comes from full communion with the Universal Church." A problem for Gummer and many others is that, in the way that the C of E decided to ordain women to the priesthood, it acted like a national denomination rather than a branch of the Church Catholic. In this view, isolation or independence from Catholic consensus and communion is a form of sectarianism. In his response, Dr. Carey objects that Gummer seems to think that the title Catholic is "the sole property of one section of the Church Universal." He writes: "This latter belief has not been the historic position of the Church of England, which has never denied that all the Churches you specify, namely the Methodist and the United Reformed, together with the Roman Catholic, are part of the 'Holy, Catholic Church.'" "For these reasons," Carey continues, "I firmly believe that we should avoid the use of 'sect' and 'sectarian' in this context. It denigrates our sister Churches like those of the Methodist and Reformed traditions. . . . It also causes offence to those of us who remain loyal to the Church of England and to the Anglican Communion." As best we can understand Dr. Carey's position, he seems to be saying that there is no such thing as a sect and therefore the C of E cannot be a sect. To simply remove from Christian history the categories of sect, schism, and heresy is radical revisionism indeed. Perhaps Dr. Carey will want to reconsider his response to Mr. Gummer, as he earlier reconsidered, and retracted, his assertion that those who oppose the ordination of women are in "grave heresy." In any event, the questions engaging Mr. Gummer, Dr. Carey, and so many others go to the heart of what is meant by "Church," and how these questions are resolved will reconfigure the Christian reality in the twenty-first century.

■ One has to admire these folks who stubbornly track everything appearing on the dreadful tube. The Media Research Center does that relentlessly, and has prepared an eleven-page report detailing television's recent sins of omission and commission in dealing with religion. "Faith in a Box" is available for $2 from MRC at 113 South West Street, Alexandria, VA 22314.

■ Yes, Virginia, there still is a National Council of Churches, although just barely. It has gone through "restructuring" several times in recent years, and is now in the process of a more thorough "transformation." General Secretary Joan Brown Campbell reports that the situation "is not becoming stabilized." The oldline Protestant churches that brought it into being and supported it financially now don't have enough money for their own programs. Campbell recently announced that the NCC is "moving towards greater reliance on grants from foundations and government, and this would require different, more flexible, patterns of hiring and using staff." Environmental issues were cited as an area where grant monies are available. The prospect of the NCC becoming a think tank, which is what institutions supported by project grants are usually called, is not uninteresting. At least we would hear no more about the NCC "representing forty million American Christians." Come to think of it, the NCC has not been talking that way for a few years. In fact, it has hardly been heard from for a few years. Odd the twists of history. The offices that house our publisher, the Institute on Religion and Public Life (RPL), are the very offices in which the NCC was launched forty-plus years ago. Maybe we should bring things full circle—merge the two think tanks, RPL and the NCC, and chalk it up to irony. Of course it would have to be understood that we are in no position to assume their liabilities.

■ In our local paper it got three and a half inches at the bottom of page twenty. Joseph Cardinal Bernardin was completely cleared of all charges of sexual misconduct. From media to Bernardin: "Here's your reputation back, your Eminence. We had a lot of fun with it and wish you luck in putting things back together again." The sordid role of reporters in this affair, and most shamelessly of CNN, should find a prominent place in journalism's hall of infamy, but it probably won't, the competition for space being so stiff. As for the accuser of Cardinal Bernardin and his memory retrieval induced by hypnosis, this is as good an occasion as any to mention the False Memory Syndrome Foundation (3401 Market St., Philadelphia, PA 19104). The FMS Foundation specializes in helping those who are victimized by false accusations of incest, sexual abuse, and other wrongs.

■ Recall the cancellation of the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Boston after a Massachusetts court ruled that a gay and lesbian contingent had the right to march. Cathleen Finn declares: "I am really gratified to know that as an Irish-American bisexual woman, the court recognizes my right to take my place among the Irish-American community in the St. Patrick's Day Parade. On the other hand, I'm severely saddened that there was no parade this year." Then recall the line from Vietnam: "We had to destroy the village in order to save it."

■ Justice Harry A. Blackmun, he of *Roe v. Wade* infamy, recently emoted all over the front pages about how he has "personally anguished" about capital punishment and has concluded that the death penalty is "unconstitutional." As Justice Scalia and numerous scholars promptly pointed out, his conclusion has everything to do with his feelings, which may well be on target, and nothing to do with the Constitution. Blackmun later visited Harvard

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Law School where, according to the *Harvard Law Record*, a packed hall greeted him with an "extended standing ovation." After his presentation, applause turned into a second standing ovation. The paper says that "Blackmun appeared somewhat taken aback" by the enthusiasm. "I wasn't sure whether my views would be popular here," he said. Apparently he was under the impression that Harvard Law School is a hotbed of pro-life agitation and support for capital punishment. Reading on: "Despite the stress of law school, Blackmun urged students not to let themselves become afflicted with self-doubt." He said he once doubted whether he was qualified to sit on the Supreme Court, but he managed to get over it. "The justice reminded students, 'The reason you're here is because you belong here.'" He's not the kind of man to pander to an audience, this Justice Blackmun. In response to student questions, he accused today's Supreme Court of being "conservative." He assured them that he did not intend to retire any time soon. "I want to hang around and prevent those jokers from overruling *Roe,*" he said. (The next week he announced his retirement.) In contrast to Blackmun, Justice Scalia is routinely criticized for being partisan and expressing himself in a manner not in keeping with the dignity of the Court.

■ Mrs. Nafis Sadik, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund and Secretary General of the Conference on Population and Development to be held in Cairo this September, was received in March by John Paul II. In an extended address, the Pope had some kind words for the Cairo conference but did not hold back in expressing "grave concern" about elements of the draft final document for Cairo. The document is indifferent to the family, ignores the moral status of the unborn, and violates the 1984 international agreement of Mexico City that "in no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning." John Paul said, "The vision of sexuality which inspires the document is individualistic. Marriage is ignored, as if it were something of the past. An institution as natural, universal, and fundamental as the family cannot be manipulated without causing serious damage to the fabric and stability of society." The Clinton Administration has declared its wholehearted support for the approach to population and development articulated in the draft final document for Cairo.

■ Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan says, "One absorbing chapter follows another," and it is true that the chapters are in sequence. Andrew Hacker, one of the last analysts to believe that the problems of the urban underclass are explained mostly by reference to white racism, says, "Masterful in conception and execution, *Who We Are* provides an original and indispensable portrait of America." At the risk of sounding churlish, *Who We Are: A Portrait of America* (Times Books) is unoriginal and eminently dispensable. Written by Sam Roberts, urban affairs columnist for the *New York Times*, the book tells you many things you never wanted to know. How many Americans dispose of their waste by public sewer, cesspool, or "other means." The number of one-bedroom and four-bedroom homes, and the ratio of automobiles to homes. And of course an awful lot of numbers about income, how many people commute, and educational levels achieved. What does not receive even one mention in this "portrait of America" is the most important associational pattern of identity and behavior in American life, namely, religion. To be fair, Roberts is working off U.S. Census data, and the census does not ask about religion or politics or social views. But apparently it does not occur to Roberts even to mention the missing factors. The sorry fact is that journalists and social analysts really do believe that they understand America by toting up all kinds of socioeconomic numbers without reference to what studies have shown is the most important single variable in predicting social attitudes and behavior—that variable being, of course, religious participation. Alright, so we have said this kind of thing before. But please note that we have not lost our capacity to be astonished by the obtuseness of otherwise intelligent people. Absent the allegiances and differences that make the greatest difference, most Americans will not recognize themselves in what is pretentiously presented as "a portrait of America."

■ Like the irrepressible yawn, another campaign is launched, a call to arms is issued, the trumpet is sounded once again—all against the great threat of students praying in public schools. The usual belligerents have been rounded up: the American Jewish Committee, the Joint Baptist Committee, the Religious Action Center of Hebrew Union College, the Episcopal Church, and People for the American Way. Apparently the AJC is the point organization on this one. In a letter to be sent to thousands of school superintendents and teachers, the usual arguments are made about the separation of church and state, along with the also usual reminder that students are free to pray privately and silently. Several points might be made in response. First, while school prayer is not near the top of our list of things that something must be done about, it is just silly to pretend that its elimination in the 1960s was not a major step toward the secularization of the classroom. Second, the argument that some students might be offended undermines the goal of helping young people to live with genuine pluralism, including religious pluralism. Third, theologically generalized formulations in prayer need not, as alleged, "trivialize" prayer, any more than pledging

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allegiance to "one nation under God" is trivial. (Why don't these groups bite the bullet and go after the Pledge of Allegiance?) Fourth, the letter's piously expressed anxiety about making the schools a "battleground over religion" is disingenuous. "We urge all people," says the letter, "to declare a permanent cease-fire on this issue." But so far as we can see the ACLU and the groups promoting this letter are the only ones firing. They do succeed in rousing populist resentment. An increasing number of parents, school boards, and legislators have been heard whispering Cicero's famous retort, *Tutene? Atque cuius exercitus?* (You and whose army?) Maybe the only good thing that will come of this is that kids who are fed almost any sexual or ideological madness in school and are absolutely forbidden only cigarettes and prayer will come to think that prayer must be a pretty exciting thing to do. Extremism in the cause of the strict separation of church and state works in mysterious ways. This brief comment is by no means all that needs to be said about school prayer and the secularization of the public school classroom. But this call for "a permanent cease-fire" amounts to telling those who disagree to shut up. That is not the way to cultivate urgently necessary discussion about culture, morality, and religion in public education.

■ The use of Prozac and similar drugs is, one might say in light of the hallucogenic connection, mushrooming. If it makes people feel better, why not? In response to that question, Leon Kass of the University of Chicago has some sobering thoughts: "Finally, what of those technologies for the soul, only now being marshaled, to combat depression, dementia, stress, and schizophrenia? What of applied psychology and neurochemistry, behavior modification and psychopharmacology? If modern life contributes mightily to unhappiness, can we not bring technology to the rescue? Can we not make good on the Cartesian promise to make men stronger and better in mind and in heart by understanding the material basis of aggression, desire, grief, pain, and pleasure? Would this not be the noblest form of mastery, the production of artful self-command, without the need for self-sacrifice and self-restraint? On the contrary. Here man's final technical conquest of his own nature would almost certainly leave mankind utterly enfeebled. This form of mastery would be identical with utter dehumanization. Read Huxley's *Brave New World*, read C. S. Lewis' *Abolition of Man*, read Nietzsche's account of the last man, and then read the newspapers. Homogenization, mediocrity, pacification, drug-induced contentment, debasement of taste, souls without loves and longings—these are the inevitable results of making the essence of human nature the last project for technical mastery. In his moment of triumph, Promethean man will also become a contented cow. Like Midas, technological man is cursed to acquire precisely what he wished for, only to discover—painfully and too late—that what he wished for is not exactly what he wanted. Or, worse than Midas, he may be so dehumanized in the process that he is even unaware that he is no longer truly human." The above is from *Technology in the Western Political Tradition*, edited by Arthur M. Melzer and friends (Cornell University Press). Other essays of particular note in the same volume are Stanley Jaki on the medieval basis of modern science, Wilson Carey McWilliams on America as the technological republic, and William Galston on what technology does to the theory and practice of liberal democracy.

■ The indefatigible Richard Stith of Valparaiso Law School points out that, while we discussed some items appearing in *Life Advocate* a few months ago, we did not let readers know how they can get hold of that very useful publication. *Life Advocate* offers a valuable overview of news and ideas relative to pro-life activism and is available for $30 per year by writing P.O. Box 13656, Portland, OR 97213.

■ In a book dedicated to his "husband," gay advocate Richard D. Mohr contends that we all have to gain by the achievement of the homosexual agenda, including the full acceptance of homosexuals in the military (*A More Perfect Union: Why Straight America Must Stand Up for Gay Rights*, Beacon). Along the way he provides a vision of a wistfully wise and gentle world that inspires his advocacy. "It will

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allow everyone to have a more relaxed view of human agency and experience the universe as a more hospitable, commodious, and, in turn, respect-worthy abode. The citizen need not define himself as conqueror, need not view the universe and others as something that must be subjugated to or killed by his intrusive presence in order to be good. One need not invade others to be what one is. One may be open to being, rather than stand in opposition to it. Reason can then include a healthy element of contemplation, rather than being limited to instrumental uses, calculations of utility, and the analysis of things into manageable parts. We will be less in need of grace, for we shall be more graceful. We will be less in need of divine intervention, for we will stand more receptive to each other. We can worry less about being ineffectual and weak. We will be more merciful to those who fail, for we will have less to prove in ourselves. A kinder, gentler nation will finally become a live possibility. We will be more self-contained and self-confident, even as we are more easily able to make connections with each other. We will be more productive when we view productivity as creation and care rather than as management and control. We will be more self-sufficient, as we release for individual flourishing the massive cultural energy now wasted in the anxiety required to prop up the false symbol of self-sufficiency—impenetrability." Apart from its double entendres, it is a vision so fragile in its implausibility and so touchingly captive to its desires that it is understandable that many Americans who are not homosexual find it quite disarming. To challenge it strikes them as simply mean. The alternative is to relax and let it be, and maybe even cheer the poignant thing on, just a little. It is a vision marked by the gracefulness that offers itself as consolation for the loss of grace.

■ Robert Nisbet's *History of the Idea of Progress*, first published in 1980, is reprinted by Transaction with a new introduction in which the author reflects on the book's reception and the probable fate of the idea of progress. "Far from being obstacles or barriers the thoughts of progress by the ancients and Christians alike were steps toward the modern idea of progress. In Augustine, intellectual child of the Greeks as well as of the Jews, to this day preeminent theologian in Christian history, there are all the essential ingredients of the modern idea of progress: the vision of an unfolding, cumulative advancement of the human race in time—a unified, single human race, be it emphasized—a single time frame for all the peoples and epochs of the past and present, the conception of time as a linear, single flow, the use of evolving stages and epochs in the history of humanity, belief in the *necessary*, as well as sacred character of mankind's history as set forth in the Old Testament, and, finally, the envisagement of a future, distinctly utopian end of history when the saved would go to eternal heaven. As I have tried to show in this book, all that was necessary for the rationalists of the modern era was to secularize, to remove God or relegate God to a distance, and the modern idea of progress would have been achieved. What was required when the death of God took place in the nineteenth century was some kind of purportedly scientific essence or process that was labeled *Geist* or ended in *ism*. Thus, especially in the nineteenth century, the flood of entelechies to explain the progressive character of human history without having to resuscitate Augustine's God. *Weltgeist, Urgeist, Naturgeist, Dialectic, First Cause, the Unknowable*—these are some of the words that became fashionable in the nineteenth century, one and all made to cover phenomena that a century earlier had been covered by reference to God." In our present circumstance Nisbet observes that other utopias such as communism and socialism "are in discredit at the moment, perhaps to remain so indefinitely." As for the idea of progress itself, we are still basking in its afterglow but "these premises are eroding fatefully and fatally." Lest that sound excessively doleful, he adds, "But no one can be sure in these matters." That is always a wise proviso.

■ Writing in *Faith & Renewal*, Paul Kyle proposes "a renewed vision of married life in Christ: the perfect partnership, plundering hell and populating heaven through power-filled prayer, precision parenting, and potent proclamation of the gospel." Perhaps someone will be so kind as to direct him to a twelve-step program for the alliterately addicted.

■ Civic, educational, and religious groups confabbed in Seattle to fret about the perennial question of values and young people (who apparently do not have enough, or have the wrong kind, or whatever). Linda Popov, cofounder of the Virtues Project, was there. She explained that "values are difficult to teach because they are so intertwined with religion and culture." Certainly we want to keep our distance from religion and culture. Then there is this: "The Virtues Project, sponsored in part by the Church Council of Greater Seattle, has prepared a value-free curriculum to teach virtues." Presumably the pro- and anti-virtue sides get equal time.

■ And now for an encouraging item from, of all places, Detroit. Shortly after arriving at that scene of urban devastation as Catholic archbishop, Adam Maida proposed to the Economic Club of Detroit that everybody should get behind a program to establish ecumenical, Christ-centered schools for inner city children. Not everybody responded, of course, but a heartening number of religious, business, and civic leaders caught the vision. The result, three years later, is The Cornerstone Schools, a project that is giving the lie to the claim that

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"educational reform" is a fairy tale. Cornerstone is a program that might well be emulated in other cities and towns. For more information, write Dr. Norma Henry, Executive Director, 1234 Washington Blvd., Detroit, MI 48226.

■ There was in the April issue a brief notice of the death of Christopher Lasch. Something more should be said. Kit Lasch served on our Editorial Advisory Board and was a dear friend. He was a gentleman—very gentle and very manly. With *The Culture of Narcissism* and other works, he helped many thoughtful Americans make the move from the leftisms of the 1960s to a more critical understanding of the cultural boundaries of the political. Speaking at his memorial service, Jean Elshtain agreed with his own assessment that his entire life's work was an exploration of "limits and hope." In the long and painful months in which he was dying of cancer, he pressed to finish *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, which will be published this fall. Dale Vree, editor of *New Oxford Review*, knew Kit Lasch well and has written about him in a most compelling way. Vree is very much a Catholic and thinks Lasch edged up to becoming one, but finally, says Vree, he is to be counted among "some of the best friends of the Church" who could not quite come in. He is, Vree suggests, in the "best friends" company of such as Simone Weil, Henri Bergson, Henry Adams, and C. S. Lewis. Vree writes, "All his life he set high standards, and he died as he lived. Christopher Lasch died, I have no doubt, a holy death." And so for Kit Lasch the prayer from the Commendation of the Dead: *May choirs of angels welcome you and lead you to the bosom of Abraham, and there where Lazarus is poor no more may you find eternal rest.*

Sources: On Kepel's book *The Revenge of God, Economist*, February 26, 1994. Carl Braaten on Protestantism in *Lutheran Forum*, Lent 1994. On Lubavitcher Hasidim, *New York Daily News*, March 23, 1994. Peter Steinfels on Michael Novak in *New York Times*, March 9, 1994. On St. Patrick's Day Parade, *New York Times* editorial, March 15, 1994.

WHILE WE'RE AT IT: R. V. Short on medical students, *Lancet*, February 26, 1994. On RU-486 abortion pill, *New York Times*, March 23, 1994. Archbishop Weakland quoted in *Milwaukee Journal*, March 20, 1994. Michael Thomas Ford on presentations of homosexuality in children's books, *Publishers Weekly*, February 21, 1994. Joe Conason on Jesus and health care, *New York Observer*, March 21, 1994. Archbishop Carey quoted in the *Tablet*, March 5, 1994. Joan Campbell on NCC, Ecumenical Press Service, March 3, 1994. On St. Patrick's Day Parade in Boston, *New York Times*, March 12, 1994. On Justice Blackmun, *Harvard Law Record*, March 11, 1994. Pope on Cairo conference, news release from Holy See at U.N. On school prayer, letter from American Jewish Committee, March 1994. Paul Kyle on married life, *Faith & Renewal*, March/April 1994. On Virtues Project and value-free virtues, *The Progress*, March 10, 1994. Dale Vree on Christopher Lasch, *New Oxford Review*, April 1994.

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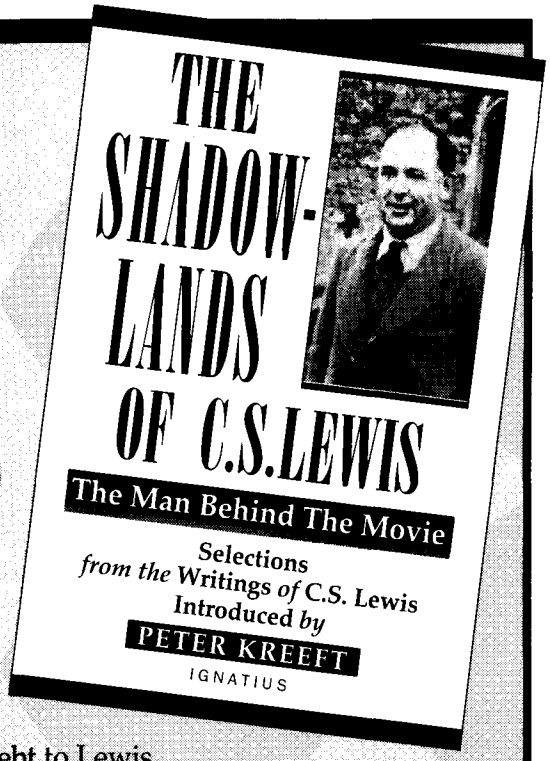
The Shadow-Lands of C.S. Lewis

The Man Behind the Movie



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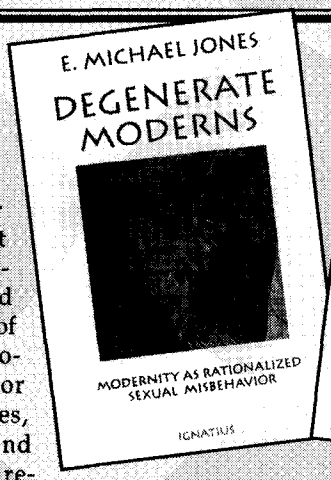

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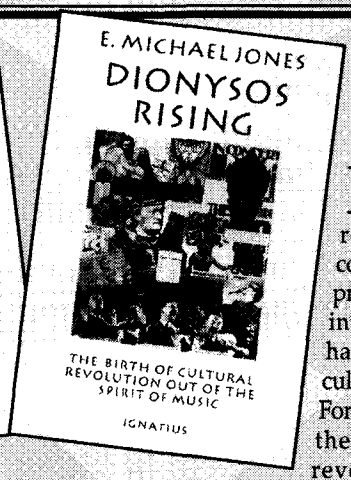

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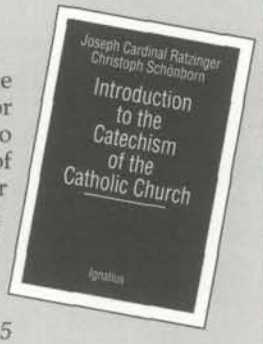

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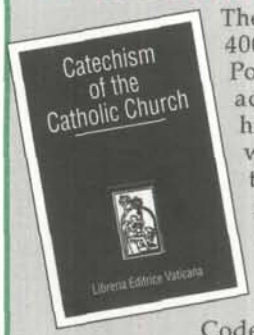

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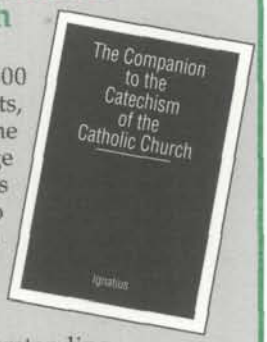

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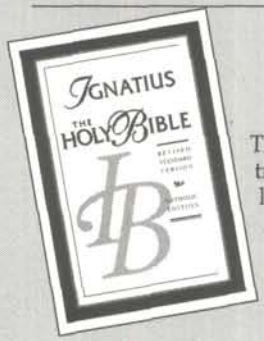

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